# Upanishads

**SRI AUROBINDO KAPALI SHASTRY INSTITUTE OF VEDIC CULTURE**
**#63, 13th Main, 4th Block East, Jayanagar**
**Bangalore – 560 011**

**Phone: +91-80-26556315**
**Email: info@vedah.com**
**Web: www.vedah.org**

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## Introduction

The Upanishads have always been regarded in India as the crown of the Veda and as the end of the Veda as implied by the term *vedanta.* The major Upanishads are not separate books, but the last parts or the penultimate parts of the corresponding *brahmana* books. If the *brahmana* has an *aranyaka* attached to it, then the corresponding Upanishad is at the end of the *aranyaka* book. *Shatapatha brahmana* has no *aranyaka;* thus its last book or chapter contains the Upanishad, the famous *Brhadaranyaka* Upanishad. For details, see the section, 'other vedic books'.

"The Upanishads are not a revolutionary departure from the *vedic* mind and its temperament and fundamental ideas, but a continuation and development and to a certain extent an enlarging transformation in the sense of bringing out the into open expression all that was held covered in the symbolic *vedic* speech as a mystery and a secret", [1, Foundations, p.310]. "the *rishis* of the Upanishads sought to recover the lost or waning knowledge of the Veda by meditation and spiritual experience and they used the text of the ancient mantras as a prop and authority for their own intuitions and perception or else the *vedic* word was a seed of thought and vision by which they recovered old truths in new forms. What they found, they expressed in other terms more intelligible to the age in which they lived". As examples of the first method, we may mention the *Chhandogya* Upanishad (3.12.5) or *Brhadaranyaka* Upanishad (4.4.23) which state, "as stated in the *rik,* the mantra of Rigveda". As an example of the second, we may mention the concept of *brahman.* RV mentions repeatedly the Supreme One, or the One Truth, *ekam sat,* which underlines all existence. The Upanishads developed this seed of thought into the magnificent conception of *brahman.*

Chhandogya Upanishad (7.7.1) declares that *rig* Veda can be understood only by meditation *vijnanena.* The extensive connection between the Veda Samhitas and Upanishads mentioned in this essay should make a reader sceptical of statements such as, "Upanishads are a protest against the externality of *vedic* practices".

The Upanishads can be divided into roughly two categories for study. In the first are the metrical Upanishads, relatively smaller in size, such as *Isha, Katha, Mundaka, Shvetashvatara, Taittiriya,* the middle two chapters of the non-metrical *Brhadaranyaka* Upanishad etc. These Upanishads use symbolism sparingly, so that one can get some idea of their contents by one's rational intellect. In the second group belong all other Upanishads which are non-metrical and use symbolism extensively. Both *Aitareya* Upanishad (1.3.14) and *Brhadaranyaka* Upanishad (4.2.2) declare that, "Gods love indirect reference or symbolism", *paroksha priya hi devah.* The purport is that the cosmic powers *devah* prefer that

the profound truths be expressed only in a symbolic manner so that only the eager and persistent student can understand them. The *Brhadaranyaka* Upanishad begins with the detailed symbolism of the sacrificial horse, each one of whose limbs such as the face, belly, legs etc., corresponds to a specific cosmic power. For instance Usha, the dawn is the head of the sacrificial horse. The great commentator Shankara gives a brief explanation without clarifying the deeper meaning. The fifth and the sixth chapters of the *Brhadaranyaka* Upanishad have verses which for a gross mind appear to be ritualistic recipes for obtaining children of specific characteristics. The commentators practically ignore the fifth and sixth chapters, declaring that they are meant for the householders who deal with mundane matters. Persons who have attempted to pierce the symbolism in the Veda Samhitas can easily get clues to understanding the deeper meanings of these verses behind their apparently gross outward form.

The Upanishads, besides delineating various spiritual experiences, also give a few hints on *sadhana,* i.e., paths of spiritual realization. These methods of *sadhana* are called *vidyas.* The Upanishad does not give much detail about the *vidyas* because such details cannot be conveyed in print. Typically, a teacher transmits these truths to the students, often in silence. There are not many books in print which discuss the relevance of Upanishadic thought for spiritual practice. One such book is the "Light on the Upanishads" by Sri T. V. Kapali Sastry [2, vol. 1] which discusses some of the secret *vidyas* in the Upanishads and relates them to the corresponding ideas in RV. These *vidyas* are identified either by the name of the teacher like Shandilya *vidya, Bhrgu Varuni vidya* or by their contents like the *Bhuma vidya, Vaishvanara vidya, Madhu vidya, Prana vidya* and so on. Vaishvanara means the divine force, which permeates every aspect of existence. This knowledge in the *Chhandogya* Upanishad is related to the similar idea in the RV contained in the ten hymns to the deity Vaishvanara. The *Madhu vidya* or the doctrine of the honey or bliss as the foundation of all existence, discussed in detail in *Brhadaranyaka* Upanishad (2.5) is related to the corresponding mantras in the first book of Rigveda. Again the particular method of realisation described in the sixth book of *Brhadaranyaka* Upanishad (6.3.6) involves the chanting of the famous *gayatri* hymn of RV (3.62.10) and the *madhu* mantras in RV (1.90). This particular method is extolled in the *Brhadaranyaka* Upanishad (6.3.7-6.3.12) stating, "if any one sprinkles it on a dry stump, branches would grow and leaves spring forth".

We will mention two of the *vidyas* in some detail since they connect the Veda Samhita and Upanishad, namely Madhu Vidya and Vaishvanara Vidya in later sections.

## Anecdotes in Upanishads



### Krshna, Son of Devaki

The Chandogya Upanishad gives a special teaching in the sections (3.17.1-3.17.5). The section (3.17.6) states: "Ghora Angiras expounded this well-known doctrine to Devaki's son Krshna and said; 'such a knower should, at the time of death, repeat this triad:

*akshitamasi* You are imperishable

*achyutamasi* You are unchangeable

*pranasamshitamasi* You are the subtle essence of Prana'

(On hearing the above) he (Krshna) became tireless apipasa".

Then the Upanishad quotes two verses from the Rigveda Samhita namely (8.6.30) and (1.50.10), the famous mantra to the supreme God, the Divine Sun Surya.

Here is the earliest mention of Sri Krshna. As Sri Aurobindo states, "it speaks of Krshna, son of Devaki, in a tone that would justify us in assuming that it regarded them not as ancient and far—off names but as men who had walked on earth in living memory."

### Satyakama Jabala and the Vedic Society

The story of Satyakama is one of the most typical in the Upanishad. It is full of sidelights on early Vedantic teaching, Yogic *sadhana* and that deep psychical

knowledge which the writer took for granted in the hearers of his work. So much knowledge, indeed, is thus taken for granted that it is impossible for anyone not himself a practiser of Yoga, to understand anything but its broad conclusions. The modern commentators, Shankara included, have approached it in order to establish particular metaphysical doctrines, not to elucidate its entire significance. I shall take the side that has been neglected; for what to the European inquirer are merely "the babblings of children", bear to the Yogin an aspect of infinite truth, value and significance.

"Now Satyakama Jabala spoke unto his mother Jabala and said, 'Mother, I shall go and lead the life of the Brahmacharin; tell me what is my *gotra*.' But she answered him, 'This I know not, my son, of what *gotra* thou art; resorting to many as a serving-woman in my youth I got thee, therefore I know not of what *gotra* thou art. But Jabala is my name and Satyakama is thine, Satyakama Jabala therefore call thyself.' So he came to Haridrumata the Gautama and said, 'I would stay with my Lord as a Brahmacharin, let me therefore enter under thee.' And he said to him, 'My son, of what *gotra* art thou?' But the other answered, 'This, alas, I know not, of what *gotra* I am; I asked my mother and she answered me, "Resorting to many in my youth as a serving-woman I got thee, therefore I know not of what *gotra* thou art, but Jabala is my name and Satyakama is thine"; Satyakama Jabala therefore am I.' And he said to him, 'None who is not a Brahmin can be strong enough to say this; gather the firewood, my son, I will take thee under me, for thou didst not depart from the truth.' He admitted him and put forth four hundred cows weak and lean and said, 'These, my son, do thou follow as a herd,' and he set the cows in motion and said, 'Return not until they are a thousand.' And he fared abroad with them during the years till they were a thousand."

Caste was no bar in Hinduism for study.

So the story opens, and simple as it seems, it already contains several points of capital importance in understanding the ideas of the time and the principles of the old vedantic sadhana. Satyakama, as we gather from other passages, was one of the great vedantic teachers of the time immediately previous to the composition of the Chhandogya Upanishad. But his birth is the meanest possible. His mother is a serving-girl, not a dasi attached to a permanent household whose son could have named his father and his *gotra*, but a *paricharika,* serving for hire at various houses, “resorting to many” and therefore unable to name her son's father. Satyakama has, therefore, neither caste, nor *gotra*, nor any position in life. It appears from this story as from others that, although the system of the four castes was firmly established, it counted as no obstacle in the pursuit of knowledge and spiritual advancement. The Kshatriya could teach the Brahmin, the illegitimate; fatherless son of the serving-girl could be guru to the purest and highest blood in the land. This is nothing new or improbable, for it has been

throughout the history of Hinduism and the shutting out of anyone from spiritual truth and culture on the ground of caste is an invention of later times. In the nature of things the usual rule would be for the greater number of spiritual preceptors to be found in the higher castes, but this was the result of natural laws and not of a fixed prohibition. It is noticeable also from this and other instances that it was the father's position that fixed the son's, and the mother's seems to have been of very minor importance. The question about the *gotra* was of importance, probably, with regard to the rites and other circumstances of initiation. Satyakama must have known perfectly well that he was the illegitimate son of a serving-woman, but he wished to know his father's name and *gotra* because he would have to tell it to his guru. Even after knowing the worst, he persisted in his intention of taking up spiritual studies, so that he can have had no fear of being rejected on account of his base origin. His guru, impressed by his truth-fullness, says, "None but a Brahmin would have the moral strength to make such an avowal." It can hardly be meant by this that Satyakama's father must have been a Brahmin, but that since he had the Brahmin qualities, he must be accepted as a Brahmin. Even the Kshatriya would have hesitated to speak so truthfully, because the Kshatriya is by nature a lover of honour and shuns dishonour, he has the sense of *mana* and *apamana* but the true Brahmin is *samo manapamanayoh*, he accepts indifferently worldly honour and dishonour and cares only for the truth and the right. In short the Gautama concludes that, whatever may be Satyakama's physical birth, spiritually he is of the highest order and especially fitted for a *sadhaka; na satyad agah,* he did not depart from the truth.

The second point is the first action of the guru after the ceremony of initiation. Instead of beginning the instruction of this promising disciple he sends him out with four hundred miserable kine, more likely to die than prosper and increase, and forbids him to return till he has increased them to a thousand. Wherefore this singular arrangement? Was it a test? Was it a discipline? But Haridrumata had already seen that his new disciple had the high Brahmin qualities. What more did he require?

**(from “The Upanishads” by Sri Aurobindo)**

## The Heavenly word da and its three meanings

Brhadaranyaka U. (5.2.1-5.2.3)

Gods, humans and Asura all three descendents of Prajapati-lived with him as students for a time.

Then the gods said: "Teach us, Sir!". In reply Prajapati uttered one syllable "da". Then he said: "Have you understood?" They answered, "Yes we have.

You said to us, 'damyata-be self-controlled.'

"Yes" agreed Prajapaati.

Then the humans said: "Teach us, Sir!". In reply Prajapati uttered one syllable "da". Then he said: "Have you understood?". They answered, "yes, we have.

You said to us, 'datta-be charitable'". "Yes", agreed Prajapati.

Then the asura said: "Teach us, Sir!". In reply Prajapati uttered one syllable "da". Then he said: "Have you understood?". They answered, "Yes, we have. You said to us, *dayadhvam*-be compassionate." "Yes", agreed Prajapati.

Then the heavenly voice *daivi vak,* thunders da, da, da – be self-controlled, give and be compassionate. Therefore one should learn these three; *damam, danam, dayam,* self-control, charity and compassion.

### Chakrayana Ushasti and apat dharma

(Section 10 of chapter one; Chhandogya U.)

Ushasti, son of Chakra, a brahmin was well known as the chief priest for carrying out the sacrifices done on behalf of kings and nobles. As such, he traveled from place to place. At one instant he lived along with his young wife in a deplorable condition in a village of elephant-drivers. The village was in a state of famine because of the destruction of coops by hail or locusts. He begged food from an elephant driver who spared him some of the beans he was waiting. Then the driver offered him water which was refused saying, "I shall be drinking what is defiled". Then the drawer asked him, "Are not these beans (which you took) also defiled". Ushaste replied, "unless I ate them, I surely would not have survived, but drinking is at my option". Ushasti brought the reminder of the beans to his wife. Next morning he said, "Alas, if I could get a little food, I could earn a little wealth since the king is going to perform a sacrifice." His wife said to him, "here are the beans you gave me yesterday". Then he started towards the place of sacrifice, where all the priests had to already been appointed. Then he introduced himself to the principal person in the sacrifice. He said, "I searched for you, received sir, for all these priestly offices, but not finding you, sir, I have chosen others; revered sir, you yourself take up all the priestly offices for me". Ushasti replied, "Be it so; let these save priests sing the hymns permitted by me. But you should give me as much wealth as you give them". Very well said the

sacrifcer. Then he taught the current priests some subtle aspects of the sacrifice rite the deity etc.

This anecdote illustrates two aspects of the Vedic society. Ushasti being a brahmin had to strictly follow the rules of diet. However in times of emergencies like starvation, the rules can be relaxed just to allow for survival. It is called apat dharma, dharma in emergency.

Secondly note the cordial relationship between Ushasti and the priests who had already been appointed. These priests were eager to learn the deeper knowledge from Ushasti. Note Ushasti did not tell the king, “remove these priests from office”. He said, “let them continue under my direction”.

## The Sage Raikva, the Yoked One

(Section one of chapter 4 of Chhandogya U.)

Janashruti Pautrayana was a Kshatriya king, well known as a generous and wise man. Once he overheard two swans conversing in the sky flying above. The first swan said, "the effulgence of the Janushruti has spread like the heaven". The second swan remarked, "How could you describe him as if he were Raikva, the yoked one" and so on. Janushruti on hearing this talk ordered his attendant to find out and bring this Raikva. The attendant was unsuccessful in his quest. Then Janashruti instructed him to search for Raikva in places where the knowers of Brahman abide. This time the attendant was successful. He saw the person sitting near a cart scratching eruptions on his skin. After getting the confirmation, he informed his master. Janashrute went to this person Raikva with several costly gifts including a chariot, necklace and a hundred cows and said, "O Raikva, all these presents are for you. Revered Sir, instruct me about the deity whom you worship".

Raikva replied, "O Shudra, may the chariot and necklaces etc remain with you". After repeated entreaties including the offer of his daughter in marriage, and several villages, he went to Raikva for the instruction. Raikva gave him the esoteric knowledge known as Samvarga Vidya.

Note there the fearlessness of Raikva. He addressed the king as a shudra because the king appeared to believe that presents can be exchanged for knowledge.

The Sanskrit text calls Raikva as *"sayugva raikva"* Yug means yoked. Clearly the meaning is that Raikva is the yoked one or yoked to the Divine. However it appears in English translation as 'Raikva with the cart.'

## Ten Upanishads

### Isha Upanishad

The Isha Upanishad is almost identical to the fortieth and last chapter of the Shukla Yajurveda Samhita associated with the great sage Yajnavalkya who is also prominent in the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad. It is one of the earlier Upanishad preserving the images and symbols of Veda Samhitas.

This is an important Upanishad known for its synthesis of work, knowledge and devotion, which are often considered as if incompatible. As Sri Aurobindo states:

"The Isha Upanishad in its very inception goes straight to the root of the problem the seer has set out to resolve; he starts at once with the two supreme terms of which our existence seems to be composed and in a monumental phrase, cast with the bronze of eight brief but sufficient words, he confronts them and sets them in their right and eternal relation. ***ishavasyam idam sarvam yatkincha jagatyam jagat.*** *isha and jagat,* God and Nature, Spirit and World, are the two poles of being between which our consciousness revolves. The double or biune reality is existence, is life, is man. The Eternal seated sole in all His creations occupies the ever-shifting universe and its innumerable whorls and knots of motion, each called by us an object, in all of which one Lord is multitudinously the Inhabitant. From the brilliant suns to the rose and the grain of dust, from the God and the Titan in their dark or their luminous worlds to man and the insect that he crushes thoughtlessly under his feet, everything is His temple and mansion. His is the veiled deity in the temple, the open householder in the mansion; for Him and His enjoyment of the multiplicity and the unity of His being, all were created and they have no other reason for their existence. For habitation by the Lord is all this, everything whatsoever that is moving thing in her that moves. The problem of a perfect life upon earth, a life free from those ills of which humanity seems to be the eternal and irredeemable prisoner and victim, can only be solved, in the belief of the *vedantins,* if we go back to the fundamental nature of existence; for there alone can we find the root of the evil and the truth of the remedy. They are here in the two words *isha and jagat.* The inhabitant is the Lord; in this truth, in the knowledge of it by our minds, in the realization of it by our whole nature and being is the way of escape for the victim of evil, the prisoner of limitation and death. On the other hand, Nature is a fleeting and inconstant motion preserved by the harmonious fixity of the laws which govern her particular motions. This subjection and inconstancy of Nature is the secret of our bondage, death, limitation and suffering. We who entangle ourselves in the modalities of Nature must realize, if we would escape from her confounding illusion, the other pole of our existence, unqualified Spirit or God. By rising to the God within us we become free and stand liberated from the bondage of the world and the snare of death. For God is freedom, God is

immortality. *mrtyum tirtva amrtam ashnute.* Crossing over death, we enjoy immortality, even when we are living.

See also Mahavakyas.

## Kena Upanishad

In all the Upanishads, the aim is an individual quest, i.e., the attainment of the supreme Brahman. Is it a purely selfish endeavour? What is the use of the person who has mastered this knowledge to the community?

Kena Upanishad definitively answers this question. It tries to remove from the popular mind the misconception that the quest for the Brahman excludes any possibility of happiness. It gives a description of the status of immortality which is attained by the aspirants. It declares that Brahman in its nature is "That Delight", *tad vanam. vana* is the vedic word for delight or delightful, and *"tad vanam"* means the transcendent Delight, the all-blissful Ananda of which the Taittiriya Upanishad regards as the highest Brahman.

Then it answers the main question posed earlier. The knower of Brahman becomes a centre of the Divine Delight shedding it on the entire world and attracting all to a fountain of joy and love and self-fulfillment in the universe.

## Katha Upanishad

It is metrical Upanishad. In popular literature, it is portrayed as giving the "secret of death". Normally when one mentions death, one expects some information on related topics like rebirth. But this Upanishad has only one or two verses on the topic of rebirth. On the surface, it looks like any other Upanishad giving a way for realizing Brahman. But a deeper view gives a different picture.

The look deals with the three boons of the God of death Yama to the aspirant Nachiketa. The name Nachiketa means one who is not conscious, i.e., one who is not aware of the depth of the questions he is asking. The commentators on this Upanishad usually ignore the first two boons and concentrate only on the third. But pondering over the replies of Yama to all the three queries of Nachiketa gives a different picture. Sri Kapali Sastry has written a masterly essay on this topic connecting it to the Rig Vedic hymn (10.135) also dealing with Yama.

The third boon chosen by Nachiketa is: "There is this doubt that when a man has passed away, some say, 'he is' *asti iti eke* and some, *'this* he is not' *na ayam asti*

*iti chaika.* Taught by thee, I would know this". Different interpretations arise for the meanings assigned to the words "he", "this".

The Upanishad stresses the idea that everyone should attain this state of immortality or attains the ONE before the death of the physical body. A person who does not do so is compelled to be reborn. What about a person who has already achieved this status. The popular new is that he/she has merged with the infinite and the separative individual consciousness is lost as a river loses its individuality when it joins the ocean.

However the Upanishad has a different view as declared in VI. 4.

***iha chedashakad boddhum prak sharirasya visrasah***

***tatah sargeshu lokeshu shariratvaya kalpate.***

"If one has been able to apprehend (It) here before the body drips down. Then one is fit for embodiment in the worlds (that are his creations)".

If one knows Him (the One) here before the body withers away, then he lives in the Light; surviving Earth-life and being in consciousness with the ONE of whom all world-existence is his embodiment, he is competent to shine forth as an embodied centre of that immortal Light, the Purusha, the ONE.

It is interesting to note how the three commentators Max Muller, Shankara and Madhwa have altered the text to get the meaning they prefer. For details, see the book, "Light on Upanishads" or "The Collected Works: Vol. 1" by Sri T.V. Kapali Sastry.

## Prashna Upanishad

This is an Upanishad made up of answers to six questions by six students who stay with the teacher for a year before posing the questions.

It has an interesting section on the syllable OM and concludes:

"To the earth the Rigveda leads, to the skies the Yajurveda, but the Soma to THAT of which the sages know. Thither the wiseman resting on OM attains to the Supreme Quietude where age and fear are cast out by immortality".

## Mundaka Upanishad

It is a metrical Upanishad belonging to Atharvaveda dedicated to the monk with the shaved head *munda,* the aspirant toward immortality in the monist path. It is a later Upanishad (3.1.1) repeats the famous verse with two birds originally in Rigveda Samhita (1.164.20) and Atharvaveda (9.9.20). Shvetashvatara Upanishad (4.6). It has many oft-quoted mantras.

***1. satyameva jayate, nanrtam***

only Truth wins, not falsehood

***2. nayamatma balahinena labhyah (3.2.4)***

The self is not won by one who is devoid of strength.

***3. nayamatma pravachanena labhyo na medhaya na bahuna shrutena***

***yamevaisha vrnute tena labhyas tasyaisha atma vivrnvate tanum svam (3.2.3)***

The self is not won by exegesis, nor by brain-power, nor by much learning of scripture. Only by him whom it chooses can it be won; to him this self unveils its own body.

***4. tatedat rcha abhyuktam***

This is THAT declared by Rig Veda.

***5. yam yam lokam manasa samvibhati vishuddhasatvah kamayate yamshcha kaman***

Whatever world the man whose inner being is purified sheds the light of his mind upon, and whatsoever desire he cherishes, that world he takes by conquest and those desires.

## Mandukya Upanishad

It is a brief Upanishad which focuses on the three states of consciousness waking, dream and dreamless sleep and the one, the fourth beyond, the *turiya.* It is the foundation for the thought of Sri Shankaracharya and the Karika of Gaudapada.

See also the essay, ‘Om in Upanishad’.

## Aitareya Upanishad

This Upanishad belongs to the earlier or Vedic period.

It deals with the problem of creation or more specifically manifestation. It begins with the phrase.

***atma va idameka evagra asit.***

In the beginning the spirit was One.

Also it contains the formation of the first human being. 'Fire became speech and entered into the mouth. . . .'(1.2.4)

This is the basis for the later *sankhya* philosophy.

It contains an interesting anecdote about the superiority of spirit over other aspects like eye or ear or the breaths like *apana.*

***parokshapriya hi devah*** (1.3.14)

The Gods love the indirect way, i.e., Gods express their basic powers via symbols.

The section (3.2) gives a comprehensive view of the 16 aspects of the consciousness or eternal wisdom *prajnanam.*

***samjnanam*** : concept

***ajnanam*** : will

***vijnanam*** : analysis

***prajnanam*** : wisdom

***medha*** : intellect

***drshti*** : vision

***dhrti*** : continuity of purpose

***mati*** : feeling

***manisha*** : understanding

***jutih*** : pain

***smrtih*** : memory

***sankalpa*** : volition

***kratu*** : operation of thought

***asuh*** : vitality

***kamah*** : desire

***vasha*** : passion

See also the essay Mahavakya.

**Taittiriya Upanishad**

It is well known for two important teachings. It describes the five sheaths characterizing the human personality. The supreme knowledge is obtained by mastering these sheaths.

"The knower of Brahman reaches that which is supreme.

This is that verse which was spoken "Truth, knowledge, infinity the Brahman".

He knows that hidden in the secrecy of the Supreme Ethers

Enjoys all desires along with the wise-thinking Brahman". (2.1)

Its other important aspect is its pragmatic attitude towards wealth. It describes a teacher who has a fund of knowledge ready for distribution, i.e., he wants to start a school for distributing his knowledge. He prays for the students and the necessary teachers to come there. He prays for the necessary physical resources of wealth, food, shelter, raiment etc., in (1.4.2). *"**avahanti vittanvana**. . . ."*

Again as mentioned in the earlier quotation (2.1) it does not regard the presence of desire itself in a man as evil. It declares that a person who has realized Brahman enjoy all the desires.

Nowhere in the Veda is it declared that "poverty is a virtue". A *sannyasin* does not take a vow of poverty. What he vows is, "s/he will accept everything the Divine gives joyfully". He enjoys the tasty food given to him; he also enjoys the food given to him which others may regard as tasteless.

For more details on this Upanishad, see the essays 'Om in Upanishad', 'Exposition of Bliss' and 'Knowledge of Brahman'.

## Brhadaranyaka Upanishad

**(The great aranyaka)**

This Upanishad along with Chhandogya is voluminous. It is the concluding part of the 14th Kanda of the Shatapatha Brahmana associated with the Shukla Yajurveda. As Sri Aurobindo states 'It is at once the most obscure and the profoundest of the Upanishads, offers peculiar difficulties to the modern mind. If its ideas are remote from us, its language is still more remote. . . . . . extraordinarily rich in rare philosophical suggestions and delicate psychology . . . . . "

"The Upanishad begins with the statement: "OM. Dawn is the head of the horse *ashva* sacrificial". It gives a symbolic description of the horse. Originally *Ashva* meant "being, existence, substance". From the sense of speed and strength, it came to mean, "horse". The word is therefore used to indicate material existence and the horse (the image conveyed by the name) is taken as the symbol of Universal existence in *annam* matter. The horse is symbolic and the sacrifice is symbolic. We have in its an image of the Virat Purusha, of the Yajniya Purusha, God expressing himself is the "material universe". (Sri Aurobindo)

Popular expositions of the Upanishad refer to the great "debate" in the forest on the nature of self. Actually a series of questions are posed to the great sage Yajnavalkya by a number of aspirants. On receiving their answers, the questioners do not contradict the sage, but go on to other questions. Yajnavalkya is giving them his spiritual experience, not simply his speculations. The aspirants pose different types of questions to elicit knowledge about different experiences. One of the prominent persons in this spiritual setting is the lady sage Gargi.

Another frequently quoted part of it is the teaching of Yajnavalkya to the King Janaka. The self is described as, "not this, not this", *neti,* (4.4.22).

This Upanishad discusses brilliantly in various chapters the methods of realizing Brahman. There it is stated that, it is not possible to have an intense quest for Brahman and also lead a householder's life. Persons interested intensely in the realization renounce their homes and take to a mendicant's life, i.e., live by begging, *bhikshacharyam charanti* (4.4.22), (3.5.1). These passages are quoted to show that works and a quest for knowledge are incompatible.

Of course, this Upanishad has passages which offer a different or corrective view. The entire chapter (2.5) deals with the doctrine of Madhu or honey. "Everything is pervaded by the bliss or honey. This earth is like honey to all beings and all beings like honey to the earth. ...... This knowledge is the means for attaining immortality...... The underlying unity is brahman . . . . ."

This Upanishad has a section (6.3.6) glorifying the famous *gayatri* mantra in Rigveda addressed to the deity *Savitr.* A ritual is given which combines this *gayatri* verse with the famous mantras of madhu or mystic honey in Rigveda [RV (1.90.6-8)].

Also see the essay on the ‘Madhu Vidya’, also ‘Mahavakya’. See also the essay on ‘anecdotes’ for information o Vedic society and Satyakama Jabala.

## Chhandogya Upanishad

The Upanishad begins with the following sentence which offers a clue to its content.

"Om is the syllable (the imperishable one); one should follow after it as the upward song (movement); for with Om one sings (goes) upwards; of which this is an analytical expression".

"Thus its subject is the Brahman, but the Brahman as symbolised in the OM, the sacred syllable of the Veda, not therefore the pure state of the Universal Existence only, but that existence in all its parts, the waking world and the dream self and the sleeping . . . .; the right means to win all of them, enjoy all of them and transcend all of them is the subject of *Chhandogya".* [Sri Aurobindo]

It contains two of the famous statements or *Mahavakya:*

a) *tat tvam asi;* You are that.

b) *sarvam khalu idam brahma;* Everything is brahman

These statements are to be understood in their most concrete sense. When I am talking to a person, be it a friend or foe or stranger, I should believe that s/he is brahman himself who has put on that particular garb or form which appears to be limited. The person in our front may not be nice; still we have to respectfully handle the meeting. It does not mean that we should be subservient to everyone or openly say, " I do not know anything". All that is required is that we should handle the meeting with complete awareness.

It has also several famous spiritual practices or Vidyas such as Shandilya Vidya, Prana Vidya, Sanatkumara's exhortation, Indra and Virochana's studentship etc. The subsection *Mahavakyas* gives more information.

See the essays on ‘Om in Upanishads’ and ‘Viashvanara Vidya’. See also the essay on ‘anecdotes’ for four anecdotes of this Upanishad.

## 108 Upanishads

There are more than two hundred books with the name of Upanishad. Since there is no central authority among the Hindus, anyone can write a book and call it an Upanishad. We have books such as allopanishad.

The authoritative Upanishad books are those which reflect some aspects of the vedic thought and also are attached to one of the four Vedas namely Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda.

We will clarify the sets of the so called ten major Upanishads, the thirteen Upanishads, the eighteen Upanishads, the one hundred and eight Upanishad and finally the collection, "Oupenkhat", being the translation of fifty Upanishads into Persian. The Latin translation and the German translation of this Persian version introduced the Upanishads to the Westerners.

The earliest available commentary on the Upanishads is due to Sri Shankaracharya and he commented on the ten Upanishads some of whose phrases have been quoted in the famous ancient sutra text of *Badarayana.* They are regarded as the ten major Upanishads named below:

1. **Isha**
2. **Kena**
3. **Katha**
4. **Prashna**
5. **Mundaka**
6. **Mandukya**
7. **Aitereya**
8. **Taittiriya**
9. **Chhandogya**
10. **rahadaranyaka**

The thirteen major Upanishads are made up of the above ten and *Shvetashvatara, Kaushitaki* and *Maitrayani.* The latter three Upanishads are well known and should be regarded an important as the other ten.

In 1958, V.P. Limaye and R.D. Vadekar published the original texts of eighteen Upanishads. They used several available manuscripts. It was published by the Vaidic Samshodhan Mandala. It contained the above thirteen Upanishads and five more given below:

| Bashkalamantra | Chhagaleya | Arsheya | Shaunaka | Jaiminiya |
|---|---|---|---|---|

All of them are archaic and are easily recognized as belonging to an ancient period. It is stated in the text that the manuscripts of the first four Upanishads in the list was discovered recently (1958). The first one, *Bashkhala mantra* is associated with a recension of Rigveda named *Bashkala* which is now lost.

Kena Upanishad, which is one of the 10 major Upanishads is a part of the *Jaiminiya* Upanishad mentioned above.

In the Hindu tradition, 108 is a sacred number and there was a hunch that there could be a list of 108 Upanishads.

Muktika Upanishad gives the list of 108 Upanishads. It is given as the teaching of the Divine Incarnation Sri Rama to his devotee Hanuman. It mentions the list in two places. In the first section (khanda) of adhyaya 1, verses 30 - 39, the 108 names are given in a metrical form. In the first adhyaya, second section (khanda), verses 1-5, is given the subsets of these Upanishads associated with the five Vedas namely Rigveda (10), Shukla Yajurveda (19), Krishna Yajurveda (32), Samaveda (16) and Atharvaveda (31).

The list of 108 Upanishads is quoted below. The text of *Muktika Upanishad* can be found in the book, “Samanya Vedanta Upanishads” published by Adyar Library, Adyar, Chennai. We omit the first ten major Upanishads quoted earlier.

11. **Brahma**
12. **Kaivalya**
13. **Jabala**
14. **Shvetashvatara**
15. **Hamsa**
16. **Arunika**
17. **Garbha**
18. **Narayana**
19. **Paramahamsa**
20. **Amrtabindu**
21. **Amrtanada**
22. **Atharvashiras**
23. **Atharvashika**
24. **Maitrayani**
25. **Kaushitaki**
26. **Brhajjabala**

60. **Bhikshuka**
61. **Maha**
62. **Shariraka**
63. **Yogashikha**
64. **Turiyatitavadhuta**
65. **Samnyasa**
66. **Paramahamsa-parivrajaka**
67. **Akshamalika**
68. **Avyakta**
69. **Ekakshara**
70. **Annapurna**
71. **Surya**
72. **Akshi**
73. **Adhyatma**
74. **Kundika**
75. **Savitri**

27. **Nrsimhatapaniya**
28. **Kalagnirudra**
29. **Maitreya**
30. **Subala**
31. **Kshurika**
32. **Mantrika**
33. **Sarvasara**
34. **Niralamba**
35. **Sukarahasya**
36. **Vajrasuchi**
37. **Tejobindu**
38. **Nadabindu**
39. **Dhyanabindu**
40. **Brahmavidya**
41. **Yogatattva**
42. **Atmabodha**
43. **Naradaparivrajaka**
44. **Trishikhibrahmana**
45. **Sita**
46. **Yogachudamani**
47. **Nirvana**
48. **Mandalabrahmana**
49. **Dakshinamurti**
50. **Sharabha**
51. **Skanda**
52. **Tripadvibhuti mahanarayana**
53. **Advayataraka**
54. **Ramarahasya**
55. **Ramatapaniya**
56. **Vasudeva**
57. **Mudgala**
58. **Shandilya**
59. **Paingala**
76. **Atma**
77. **Pashupatabrahma**
78. **Parabrahma**
79. **Avadhuta**
80. **Tripuratapini**
81. **Devi**
82. **Tripura**
83. **Katha(rudra)**
84. **Bhavana**
85. **Rudrahrdaya**
86. **Yogakundali**
87. **Bhasmajabala**
88. **Rudrakshajabala**
89. **Ganapati**
90. **Darshana**
91. **Tarasara**
92. **Mahavakya**
93. **Panchabrahma**
94. **Pranagnihotra**
95. **Gopalatapini**
96. **Krshna**
97. **Yajnavalkya**
98. **Varaha**
99. **Satyayana**
100. **Hayagriva**
101. **Dattatreya**
102. **Garuda**
103. **Kalisamtarana**
104. **Jabali**
105. **Soubhagyalakshmi**
106. **Sarasvatirahasya**
107. **Bahvrcha**
108. **Muktika**

In the early part of the nineteenth century, some of these were know only in their Persian- Latin-German translation. Deussen's Book on Upanishads states

that a complete text of the Upanishads was published in 1883 in Telugu script in Chennapuri (Madras or Chennai).

Later it was found out that a complete text of all these Upanishads was available along with a commentary by Sri Upanishad-Brahmayogin, whose real name is Sri Ramachandrendra, belonging to Sri Shankaracharya Matha in Kanchi in Tamil Nadu. The entire group is divided into six categories namely Samanya Vedanta, Yoga, Sannyasa, Shiva, Vishnu and Shakta.

All the Upanishads in the six categories are available as separate books with the original text, the commentary of Upanishad-Brahmayogin and the English translation of some of them published by Adyar Library and Research Centre. They can be obtained in India from their office in Adyar, Chennai-600020 and in U.S. from P.O. Box 270, Wheaton, IL, 60187, USA. The program of publishing these books was started in 1905.

**Samanya Vedanta Upanishads (24)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Akshi** | **Adhyatma** | **Annapurna** | **Atma** |
| **Atmabodha** | **Ekakshara** | **Kaushitakibrahmana** | **Garbha** |
| **Niralamba** | **Paingala** | **Pranagnihotra** | **Mantrika** |
| **Maha** | **Muktika** | **Mudgala** | **Maitrayani** |
| **Vajrasuchika** | **Shariraka** | **Shukarahasya** | **Sarvasara** |
| **Surya** | **Subala** | **Savitri** | **Skanda** |

**Sannyasa Upanishads (17)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Avadhuta** | **Aruni** | **Katharudra** | **Kundika** |
| **Jabala** | **Turiyatita** | **Naradaparivrajaka** | **Parabrahma** |
| **Nirvana** | **Paramahamsaparivrajaka** | **Paramahamsa** | **Brahma** |
| **Bhikshuka** | **Maitreya** | **Yajnavalkya** | **Shatyayaniya** |
| **Samnyasa** | | | |

**Shakta Upanishads (8)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Tripuratapini** | **Tripura** | **Sarasvati** | **Rahasya** |
| **Saubhagya** | **Lakshmi** | **Bhavana** | **Bahvrcha** |
| **Devi** | **Sita** | | |

**Vaishnava Upanishad (14)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Avyakta** | **Kalisantarana** | **Krshna** | **Garuda** |
| **Gopalatapini** | **Tarasara** | **Tripadvibhutimahanarayana** | **Dattatreya** |
| **Narayana** | **Nrsimhatapini** | **Ramarahasya** | **Vasudeva** |
| **Ramatapini** | **Hayagriva** | | |

***Shaiva* Upanishads (15)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Akshamalika** | **Atharvashikha** | **Atharvashira** | **Kalagnirudra** |
| **Kaivalya** | **Ganapati** | **Jabala** | **Dakshinamurti** |
| **Panchabrahma** | **Brhajjaabala** | **Basmajabala** | **Rudrahrdaya** |
| **Rudrakshajabala** | **Sharabha** | **Shvetashvatara** | |

**Yoga Upanishads (20)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Advayataraka** | **Trishikibrahmana** | **Brahmavidya** | **Yagatattva** |
| **Amrtanada** | **Darshana** | **Mandalabrahmana** | **Yagashikha** |
| **Amrtabindu** | **Dhyanabindu** | **Mahavakya** | **Varaha** |
| **Kshurika** | **Pashupatabrahma** | **Yagakundali** | **Shandilya** |
| **Tejobindu** | **Nadabindu** | **Yogachudamani** | **Hamsa** |

To get the number 108, some of the Upanishads have been combined. For example consider the texts of Vishnu Upanishads published by the Adyar Library. In that book, Gopala Tapini is listed as two separate books namely *Gopalapurva Tapini* and *Gopala Uttara Tapini.* Similarly *Ramatapini U.*

**Oupnek'hat Collection and its Journey to West**

This collection of Upanishads was the first to be translated into a non-Indian language namely Persian. This translation was made at Delhi (1656-1657) by Pandits who had been brought together for that purpose by Prince Dara Shukoh, son of the Mogul Emperor, Shah Jehan. This Persian translation was translated into Latin by Anquetil Duperron and published in 2 volumes of pages 735 and 916 in 1801-1802. Franz Mischel translated this into German in 1882.

It is believed that such a collection was already existent and the translators did not create the order of the Upanishads in the list.

We give below the listing of the fifty Upanishads given in the Deussen book translated by Bedekar and Palsule.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | **Tschehandouk *(Chandogya)*** | 26. | **Anbrat bandeh *(amrtabindu, more correctly Brahmabindu)*** |
| 2. | **Brehdarang *(Brhadaranyaka)*** | 27. | **Tidj bandeh *(Tejobindu)*** |
| 3. | **Mitri *(Maitrayaniya)*** | 28. | **Karbheh *(Garbha)*** |
| 4. | **Mandata *(Mundaka)*** | 29. | **Djabal *(Jabala)*** |
| 5. | **Ischavasich *(Isha)*** | 30. | **Maha narain *(Mahanarayana)*** |
| 6. | **Sarb *(Sarvopanishad)*** | 31. | **Mandouk *(Mandukya)*** |
| 7. | **Narain *(Narayana)*** | 32. | **Pank (Paingala)** |
| 8. | **Tadiw *(tadeva=Vaj. Samh. 32, 1-2)*** | 33. | **Tschchourka *(Kahurika)*** |
| 9. | **Athrbsar *(Atharvashiras)*** | 34. | **Pram hens *(Paramahamsa)*** |
| 10. | **Hensnad *(Hamsanada)*** | 35. | **Arank *(Arunika)*** |
| 11. | **Sarbsar (Sarvasara = Aitareya aranyaka chap. 2. including the Aitareya-Upanishad)** | 36. | **Kin *(Kena)*** |
| 12. | **Kok'henk *(Kaushitaki)*** | 37. | **Kiouni *(Kathaka)*** |
| 13. | **Sataster *(Shvetashvatara)*** | 38. | **Anandbli *(Anandavalli=Taitt.2)*** |
| 14. | **Porsch (Prashna)** | 39. | **Bharkbli *(Bhrguvalli=Taitt. 3)*** |
| 15. | **Dehian band *(Dhyanabindu)*** | 40 | **Bark'he soukt *(Purushasuktam=Rigveda* 10.90 besides *Uttaranarayanam, Vajasaneyi Samhita 31)*** |
| 16. | **Maha oupanekhat (Maha)** | 41. | **Djounka *(Kulika)*** |
| 17. | **Atma pra boudeh *(Atmaprabodha)*** | 42. | **Mrat lankoul *(Mrtyu-langala)*** |
| 18. | **Kioul (Kaivalya)** | 43. | **Anbratnad *(Amrtanada,* better** |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **known as *amrtabindu)*** |
| 19. | **Schat roundri *(Satarudriyam=Vaj. Samh. abridged as Nilarudra Up.)*** | 44. | **Baschkl *(Vashkala)*** |
| 20. | **Djoj sank'ha *(Yogashikha)*** | 45. | **Tschhakli *(Chhagaleya)*** |
| 21. | **Djogtat *(Yogatattva)*** | 46. | **Tark *(Taraka=tarasara 2*, Telugu printed edition p.745 and *Ramottaratapaniya 2)*** |
| 22. | **Shiv sanklap *(Shiva samkalpa=Vaj. Samh. 34. 1-6)*** | 47. | **Ark'hi *(Arsheya)*** |
| 23. | **Abrat sak'ha *(Ahtarvashikha)*** | 48. | **Pranou *(Pranava)*** |
| 24. | **Atma *(Atma)*** | 49. | **Schavank *(Shaunaka)*** |
| 25. | **Brahm badia *(Brahmavidya)*** | 50. | **Nersing'heb atma *(Nrsimha)*** |

The interesting feature here is that Taittiriya 1 is missing, but Taittiriya 2 and 3 are regarded as two separate Upanishads.

This collection includes four pieces or passages from the Vajasaneyi Samhita, chapters 16, 31, 32, 34 (Nos. 19, 40, 8, 22) of which the Shatarudriyam (Vaj. Samh. 16) appears among other collections of the Atharva-Upanishads, in an abridged form as Nilarudra-Upanishad, while the three remaining have not been included, as far as our knowledge goes, in any collection, presumably because they were regarded as being well-known passages in the Vajasaneyi. Samhita.

Shaunaka, Chhagaleya and Bhashkala Upanishad part of the eighteen Upanishads are also here.

## Mahavakya or Great Sayings

In the Hindu tradition certain phrases from the Upanishads are regarded as important. One should meditate upon them to appreciate their deep meaning.

1. You are THAT.

   *tatvamasi* (Ch. U. 6.8.7, 6.9.4)

2. Everything verily is this Brahman.

   *sarvam khalu idam brahma* (Ch. U. 3.14.1).

3. I am Brahman.

   *aham brahmasmi* (Br.U. 1.4.10).

4. This *atman* is Brahman.

   *ayamatma brahma* (Br.U. 2.5.19).

5. Consciousness is Brahma.

   *pragnanam brahma* (Ai. U. 3.3).

6. He, in the Purusha here and in the Sun, they are One.

   *sa yaschayam purushe yaschavadityе sa ekah* (Tai. U. 2.8)

7. The Purusha there and there, He am I.

*yo'savasau purushah so'hamasmi* (Isha U. 16).

The fundamental tenet of Hinduism is that there is only one existence or one Purusha. Upanishads, especially the ancient ones like Chhandogya and Isha, have a harmonious and integrated view of the Many and One. We will focus here on the implication of these statements to one aspect of everyday life.

Everyday we interact with many persons who may be our friends or foes or indifferent. Statements 1 and 2 imply that mentally we should view everyone of them as if she or he is verily Brahman. The particular feeling expressed by the person which may not be pleasant to our ears does not imply that s/he is not Brahman. Brahman puts on limitations of his own accord and acts as individual persons with different opinions, attitudes etc. If we recognize the innate

oneness, then the effect on us of the negative opinions expressed by the persons are minimal.

The statement 3 (I am Brahman) is liable for misunderstanding. Its (correct) interpretation is that we should strive to improve ourselves all the time and not complain about our supposed weaknesses or supposed injustices done to us by others. Infinite power is latent in us and it can be manifested. Consider the example of a child. It does not walk straight suddenly. It tries to walk, falls down several times before mastering the art of walking with the back straight. Similarly we have to believe that our current limitations can be overcome.

The statement 4 declares that the so called individual soul along with the body etc *atma* is also Brahman.

The statement 5 declares that one who wants to meditate on Brahman can meditate on the concept of consciousness or awareness. The first step in respecting a person is to become aware of his/her presence, speech etc. Then we recall that this power of awareness is Brahman itself.

The statements 6 and 7 declare that the Supreme Person, the Sun, *Surya* represented physically by the solar orb seen in the sky is identical with our person. We develop the relationship of identity with the Divine. As is well known, one can establish various relationships with the Divine such as that of spouse, friend, father, mother etc. The best relationship is that of the identity.

## OM in Upanishads

### OM in Taittiriya

OM is the Eternal, Om is all this universe. Om is the syllable of assent: saying OM! let us hear then begin the recitation with Om. With OM they sing the hymns of the Sama; with OM SHOM they pronounce the Shastra. With OM the priest officiating at the sacrifice says the response. With OM Brahma begins creation (or, With OM the chief priest gives sanction). With OM one sanctions the burnt offering. With OM the Brahmin ere he expound the knowledge, cries "May I attain the Eternal." The Eternal verily he attains.

### OM in Chhandogya

***om iti etad aksharam udgitam upasita;***

***om iti hy udgayati tasyopa vyakhyanam. (1.1.1)***

OM is the syllable (the Imperishable One); one should follow after it as the upward Song (movement) for with OM one sings (goes) upwards; of which this is the analytical explanation.

So, literally translated in its double meaning, both its exoteric, physical and symbolic sense and its esoteric symbolized reality, runs the initial sentence of the Upanishad. These opening lines or passages of the Vedanta are always of great importance; they are always so designed as to suggest or even sum up, if not all that comes afterwards, yet the central and pervading idea of the Upanishad. The *isha vasyam* of the *Vajasaneyi,* the *keneshitam … manas* of the Talavakara, the Sacrificial Horse of the *Brhadaranyaka,* the solitary *atman* with its hint of the future world vibrations in the *Aitareya* are of this type. The Chhandogya, we see from its first and introductory sentence, is to be a work on the right and perfect way of devoting oneself to the Brahman; the spirit, the methods, the formulae are to be given to us. Its subject is the Brahman, but the Brahman as symbolized in the OM, the sacred syllable of the Veda; not, therefore, the pure state of the Universal Existence only, but that Existence in all its parts, the waking world and the dream self and the sleeping, the manifest, half-manifest and hidden, *Bhuloka, Bhuvar* and *Swar,*—the right means to win all of them, enjoy all of them, transcend all of them, is the subject of the Chhandogya. OM is the symbol and the thing symbolized. It is the symbol, aksharam; the syllable in which all sound of speech is brought back to its wide, pure indeterminate state; it is the symbolised, aksharam, the changeless, undiminishing, unincreasing, unappearing, undying Reality which shows itself to experience in all this change, increase, diminution, appearance, departure which in a particular sum and harmony of them we call the world, just as OM, the pure eternal sound-basis of

speech shows itself to the ear in the variations and combinations of impure sound which in a particular sum and harmony of them we call the Veda. We are to follow after this OM with all our souls, *upasita,*—to apply ourselves to it and devote ourselves to its knowledge and possession, but always to OM as the Udgitha. Again in this word we have the symbolic sense and the truth symbolized expressed, as in aksharam and OM, in a single vocable with a double function and significance.

The Sanskrit has always been a language in which one word is naturally capable of several meanings and therefore carries with it a number of varied associations. It lends itself, therefore, with peculiar ease and naturalness to the figure called *shlesha* or embrace, the marriage of different meanings in a single form of words. Paronomasia in English is mere punning, a tour de force, an incongruity, a grotesque and artificial play of humour. Paronomasia, *shlesha* in Sanskrit, though in form precisely the same thing, is not punning, not incongruous but easily appropriate, not incongruous or artificial, but natural and often inevitable, not used for intellectual horseplay, but with a serious, often a high and worthy purpose. It has been abused by rhetorical writers; yet great and noble poetical effects have been obtained by its aid, as, for instance, when the same form of words has been used to convey open blame and cover secret praise. Nevertheless in classical Sanskrit, the language has become a little too rigid for the perfect use of the figure; it is too literary, too minutely grammatised; it has lost the memory of its origins. A sense of cleverness and artifice suggests itself to us because meanings known to be distinct and widely separate are brought together in a single activity of the word which usually suggests them only in different contexts. But in the Vedic *shlesha* we have no sense of cleverness or artifice, because the writers themselves had none. The language was still near to its origins and had, not perhaps an intellectual, but still an instinctive memory of them. With less grammatical and as little etymological knowledge as Panini and the other classical grammarians, the rishis had better possession of the soul of Sanskrit speech. The different meanings of a word, though distinct, were not yet entirely separate; many links yet survived between them which were afterwards lost; the gradations of sense remained, the hint of the word's history, the shading off from one sense to another. *Ardha* now means half and it means nothing else. To the Vedic man it carried other associations. Derived from the root *rdh* which meant originally to go and join, then to add to increase, to prosper, it bore the sense of place of destination, the person to whom I direct myself, or simply place; also increase, addition, a part added and so simply a part or half. To have used it in any other sense than "place of destination" or as at once "half, part" and "a place of destination" would not be a violence to the Vedic mind, but a natural association of ideas. So when they spoke of the higher worlds of Sachchidananda as *Parardha,* they meant at once the higher half of man's inner existence and the *param dhama* or high seat of Vishnu in other worlds and, in addition, thought of that high seat as the

destination of our upward movement. All this rose at once to their mind when the word was uttered, naturally, easily and, by long association, inevitably.

OM is a word in instance. When the word was spoken as a solemn affirmation, everyone thought of the *Pranava* in the Veda, but no one could listen to the word OM without thinking also of the Brahman in Its triple manifestation and in Its transcendent being. The word, aksharam, meaning both syllable and unshifting, when coupled with OM, is a word in instance; "OM the syllable" meant also, inevitably, to the Vedic mind "Brahman, who changes not nor perishes". The words *udgitha* and *udgayati* are words in instance. In classical Sanskrit the prepositional prefix to the verb was dead and bore only a conventional significance or had no force at all; *udgayati or pragayati* is not very different from the simple *gayati;* all mean merely sing or chant. But in Veda the preposition is still living and join its verb or separates itself as it pleases; therefore it keeps its full meaning always. In Vedanta the power of separation is lost, but the separate force remains. Again the roots *gi* and *ga* in classical Sanskrit mean to sing and have resigned the sense of going to their kinsman gam; but in Vedic times, the sense of going was still active and common. They meant also to express, to possess to hold; but these meanings once common to the family are now entrusted to particular members of it, *gir,* for expression, *grh* for holding. *Gatha, githa, gana, gayati, gata, gatu,* meant to the vedic mind both going and singing, meant ascending as well as upward the voice or the soul in song. When the Vedic singer said *ud gayami,* the physical idea was that perhaps, of the song rising upward, but he had also the psychical idea of the soul rising up in song to the gods and fulfill idea of the soul rising upward, but he had also the psychical idea of the soul rising up in song to the gods and fulfilling in its meeting with them and entering into them its expressed aspiration. To show that this idea is not a modern etymological fancy of my own, it is sufficient to cite the evidence of the Chhandogya Upanishad itself in this very chapter where Baka Dalbhya is spoken of as the Udgata of the Naimishiyas who obtained their desires for them by the Vedic chant, *ebhyah agayati kaman;* so, adds the Upanishad, shall everyone be a "singer to" and a "bringrer to" of desires, agata kamanam, who with this knowledge follows after OM, the Brahman, as the Udgitha.

This then is the meaning of the Upanishad that OM, the syllable, technically called the Udgitha, is to be meditated on as a symbol of the fourfold Brahman with two objects, the "singing to" of one's desires and aspirations in the triple manifestation and the spiritual ascension into the Brahman Itself so as to meet and enter into heaven after heaven and even into Its transcendent felicity. For, it says with the syllable OM one begins the chant of the Samaveda, or in the esoteric sense, by means of the meditation on OM one makes this soul-ascension and becomes master of all the soul desires. It is in this aspect and to this end that the Upanishad will expound OM. To explain Brahman in Its nature

and workings, to teach the right worship and meditation on Brahman, to establish what are the different means of attainment of results and the formulae of the mediation and worship, is its purpose. All this work of explanation has to be done in reference to Veda and Vedic sacrifice and ritual of which OM is the substance. In a certain sense, therefore, the Upanishad in an explanation of the purpose and symbology of Vedic formulate and ritual; it sums up the results of the long travail of seeking by which the first founders and pioneers of Vedantism in an age when the secret and true senses of Veda had been largely submerged in the ceremonialism and formalism of the close of the Dwapara Yuga, attempted to recover their lost heritage partly by reference to the adepts who still remained in possession of it, partly by the traditions of the great seekers of the past Yuga, Janaka, Yajnavalkya, Krshna and others, partly by their own illuminations and spiritual experience. The Chhandogya Upanishad is thus the summary history of one of the greatest and most interesting ages of human thought. (SA)

## OM in Mandukya

1. OM is this imperishable word, OM is the Universe, and this is the exposition of OM. The past, the present and the future, all that was, all that is, all that will be, is OM. Likewise all else that may exist beyond the bounds of Time, that too is OM.

2. All this Universe is the Eternal Brahman, this Self is the Eternal, and the Self is fourfold.

3. Now this the Self, as to the imperishable Word, is OM: and as to the letters, His parts are the letters and the letters are His parts, namely, AUM.

4. The Waker, Vaishvanara, the Universal Male, he is A, the first letter, because of Initiality and Pervasiveness: he that knows Him for such pervades and attains all his desires: he becomes the source and first.

5. The Dreamer, Taijasa, the Inhabitant in Luminous Mind, He is U, the second letter, because of Advance and Centrality: he that knows Him for such, advances the bounds of his knowledge and rises above difference: nor of his seed is any born that knows not the eternal.

6. The Sleeper, Prajna, the Lord of Wisdom, He is M, the third letter, because of Measure and Finality: he that knows Him for such measures with himself the Universe and becomes the departure into the Eternal.

7. Letterless is the fourth, the Incommunicable, the end of phenomena, the good, the One than whom there is no other: thus is OM. He that knows is the self and enters by hi self into the Self, he that knows, he that knows.

## Translations of Ishavasyopanishat

[The commentary is taken from the book “Upanishads” by Sri M.P. Pandit, published by Dipti Trust, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. The translation is taken from Sri Aurobindo’s book ‘Isha Upanishad’ whose copyright is with Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry.]

[The Upanishad teaches the reconciliation, by the perception of essential Unity, of the apparently incompatible opposites, God and the World, Renunciation and Enjoyment, Action and internal Freedom, the One and the Many, Being and its Becomings, the passive divine Impersonality and the active divine Personality, the Knowledge and the Ignorance, the Becoming and the Not-Becoming, life on earth and beyond and the supreme immortality. The world is a dwelling-place for the informing and governing Spirit.]

### Verse 1: World as habitation of the Lord

ॐ ईशावास्यमिदꣳ सर्वं यत्किंच जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्य स्विद्धनम् ॥

***ishavaasyam idam sarvam yat kincha jagatyam jagat;***

***tena tyaktena bhunjitha ma grdhah kasya sviddhanam.***

All this is for habitation by the Lord, whatsoever is individual universe of movement in the universal motion.

By that renounced thou shouldst enjoy, lust not after any man's possession.

The universe is a movement of the Spirit. It is a continuous unrolling of the Spirit in myriad forms which are so many currents of the Great Movement. Each form is a front, a shaping of the general stream in an individualized unit. Each one has the Whole behind, sustaining it, and thus constitutes a universe in itself. Wherefore this movement? It is meant, says the Upanishad, for the dwelling of the Spirit who has originated and cast out this extension. All is to provide a fitting abode for the Lord of All. This world is a manifestation of God for his enjoyment. He has created it out of himself in joy and takes up his dwelling in it for a yet fuller joy. And this enjoyment implies, necessarily, enjoyment by all by the many who constitute His manifestation. Yet, joy and happiness are not the normal feature of the world. In fact, the opposite seems to be the rule. Why? It

is because the many, the individuals move and act in complete ignorance of their true nature, their identity with the One Spirit informing and basing them, and through It with all the rest. Each looks upon himself as distinct and different from the other and his outlook is governed by this sense of separativity, the ego which gives birth to Desire to affirm himself against others, snatch enjoyment for himself at the cost of others. This effort leads to friction, conflict and suffering. Man is lost in activity in this vain pursuit of happiness. True enjoyment comes naturally with the renunciation of this vitiating desire, the desire for separate self-affirmation and self-aggrandizement. This is followed by an inner recognition and realization of the truth of the identity of oneself with the soul within who is always the Lord and its unity with the Soul of All who is same in each.

Thus, we learn that the world is a movement of God; it has a purpose which is to provide a habitation for God for His enjoyment. The individual is a living term and front of this manifestation and should share in this enjoyment; but his ignorance of his true nature shuts him from this happiness and gives rise to the ego-sense of a separate self-living and its consequent struggle and strife. This principle of Desire should be, put behind if one is to participate in the Lord's enjoyment. The individual must become aware of his soul, the true source of enjoyment and identity himself with this Lord of his individualised universe.

But to realize this identity with the soul within does not mean that he should withdraw from the life without, the activity of the body and mind. On the contrary he must work.

*Vasyam* is here rendered in the sense of 'to be inhabited', 'dwelt in'-root *vas* to dwell. Acharya Shankara explains it to mean 'to be clothed', 'to be enveloped'. "Look not at this unreal world but at the reality of the pure Brahman by which it shall be covered; our sense of the world must disappear into the perception of the enveloping Reality." While this may suit an adwaitic standpoint, Sri Aurobindo points out, it goes counter to the general spirit of the Upanishad which at every step reconciles the apparent Opposites in manifestation.

## Verse 2: Doing work

कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतं समाः ।
एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोऽस्ति न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ।।

***kurvanneveha karmani jijivishet shatam samah;***

***evam tvayi na anyatheto asti na karma lipyate nare.***

*Doing verily, works in this world one should wish to live a hundred years.*

*Thus it is in thee and not otherwise than this; action cleaves not to a man.*

He must, indeed, *eva,* do works. [The stress of the word *eva* in *kurvanneva* gives the force, "doing works, indeed, and not refraining from them."]

No man can desist from activity; even what is called inactivity is a kind of action and has its own results. Even as the Lord has projected this world as the means of a certain fulfillment, the individual too has a self-fulfillment to achieve and he is to participate in this activity to that end. One should live the full span of life, says the text, doing one's part; the previous verse has laid down the right mode of action and life, viz., to renounce desire and participate in this Manifestation which is meant for the enjoyment of the one Lord of All, in All. Thus done, no action can bind the doer with the motivating desire, the executing energies or with the ensuing chain of consequences. That is the true law of living. For those who follow this Law there is joy and felicity.

But for those who in their ignorance and egoism choose to ignore the truth and persist in their own false and egocentred way of life the future is different.

Sri Aurobindo notes how unnatural is the interpretation by Acharya Shankara of the word *karmani* in two different ways in the same verse. In the first line *karmani* is taken to mean sacrifices and other religious acts which are expected to be performed by the ignorant for reaping fruits from good actions and averting the results of the evil; in the second line the word is taken as the opposite, evil deeds. The Acharya says that for those who do not aim at the realisation of *atman* and are content with the normal human life, *naramatrabhimani,* doing the rituals is the only way of escaping the taint of evil deeds.

## Verse 3: Sunless worlds

असुर्या नाम ते लोका अन्धेन तमसावृताः ।
ताꣳस्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्ति ये के चात्महनो जनाः ॥

***asurya nama te loka andhena tamasavrtah;***

***tamste pretyabhigachchhanti ye ke cha atmahano janah.***

*Sunless are those worlds and enveloped in blind gloom whereto all they in their passing hence resort who are slayers of their souls.*

There are other worlds besides this material one in which we live. And when the physical body dies, the being of man goes to and through these other worlds of varying substances, of different kinds, obscure and illumined. The kind of world to which one is drawn depends upon the tendencies formed and the equipment wrought during life in body on the earth. They who have risen above the life of the senses, of preoccupation with bodily wants and pleasures, and have strived and achieved a progressive synthesis in themselves of higher knowledge, purity and luminous dynamism and peace - in a word, developed a soul-life - are naturally gravitated to like worlds of light and joy. But those who have refused to listen to the call of the soul and have forced it to slog in the quagmires of inertia and falsehood or hover round and round in the blind circle of desire and passion, pleasure and pain - these, says the Upanishad, have to pass to worlds which are sunless, [Of the two readings *asoorya,* sunless and *asurya,* titanic, undivine, Sri Aurobindo chooses the former in the light of the last four verses of the text. The prayer to the sun in those verses "refers back in thought to the sunless worlds and their blind gloom, which are recalled in the ninth and twelfth verses. The sun and his rays are intimately connected in other Upanishads also with the worlds of Light and their natural opposite is the dark and sunless, not the Titanic worlds." In Rig Veda 5.32.6 Vritra, the enemy of the devas is referred to as thriving in "sunless darkness."] bereft of the light of the Sun of spiritual truth, worlds of Darkness.

If so, is movement, Eternal movement, the sole truth? Is it not rather that the Truth in the final sense lies in Stability, in Immutability? The Upanishad affirms both as truths of the Brahman, the Supreme Reality; both are poises, of IT; each is relative to the other.

### Verses 4 and 5: Brahman, Oneness of God and the world

अनेजदेकं मनसो जवीयो नैनद्देवा आप्नुवन्पूर्वमर्षत्

तद्धावतोऽन्यानत्येति तिष्ठत् तस्मिन्नपो मातरिश्वा दधाति ॥

***anejad ekam manaso javiyo nainad deva apnuvan purvam arshat;***

***tad dhavato anyanatyeti tishthat tasminn apo matarishva dadhati.***

*One unmoving that is swifter than Mind, That the Gods reach not, for it progresses ever in front.*

*That, standing, passes beyond others as they run. In That the Master of Life establishes the Waters.*

तदेजति तन्नैजति तद्दूरे तद्वन्तिके ।
तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तदु सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः ॥

***tat ejati tannaijati tad dure tadvantike,***

***tadantarasya sarvasya tadu sarvasyasya bahyatah.***

That moves and That moves not; That is far and the same is near;

That is within all this and That also is outside all this.

Brahman is beyond space, Time and Causality. Movement and quiescence, duration and eternity, action and inaction, are not terms in which It can be described or contained. In itself it is indescribable. But turned towards manifestation, it is poised in the two statuses, the stable and the motional; Space, Time, Causality are terms of its manifestation, its own self-extension. It contains all these as their continent and yet transcends them. Moveless, it contains and holds beyond all movement. The Gods, the Powers it puts forth to work out its self-expression cannot, naturally, surpass it; it is always vaster than its own emanations.

The Brahman extends itself variously, not singly in one form. Its consciousness expresses and forms itself in several gradations, organizes itself around several principles, each active in the forefront on its level. These extensions, Sri Aurobindo points out, are in the ancient system septuple, known by the *vyahrtis Bhuh, Bhuvah, Suvah, Mahas, Jana, Tapas* and *Satya* which in modern language are the principles, and planes based on them, of Matter, Life, Mind, Idea, Bliss, Consciousness and Force, and Existence. Thus does the text say that in His own extension as the Mother of things, - Earth, the physical matter, [see note on the meaning of *apas* below] He, the Brahman as the Life-Force wakes and spreads Himself, i.e. enlivening all that He enters into and sets aflow the Waters which, in the Vedic system, represent currents of conscious being. "The Waters, otherwise called the seven streams or the seven fostering Cows, are the Vedic symbol for the seven cosmic principles and their activities, three inferior, the physical, vital and mental, four superior, the divine Truth, the divine Bliss, and divine Will and Consciousness, and the divine Being. On this conception also is founded the ancient idea of the seven worlds in each of which the seven principles are separately active by their various harmonies.

Thus it is He that is the origin, the end and the container of the things; creating. He indwells the forms of his manifestation, enjoys variously His thousand abodes. He is the One, the same everywhere. And if each individual formation behaves and acts as if it is a separate entity, different from others, it is because it is clouded in its outer consciousness, it has temporarily lost touch with the

unifying knowledge and consciousness at its back—that which sustains it as well as it does all the rest in a common extension. The moment one realises this truth effectively and gets aware of the one Self in all and as the All, gets the right perspective of the union of all in the One Self, the sense of separativity loses its validity and with it goes the need to affirm oneself at the cost of others, the sense of opposition from other forms.

Note on *apas* in the verse 4:

"*Apas*, as it is accentuated in the version of the White Yajurveda, can mean only 'waters'. If this accentuation is disregarded, we may take it as the singular *apas,* work, action. Shankara however, renders it by the plural, works. The difficulty only arises because the true Vedic sense of the word had been forgotten and it came to be taken as referring to the fourth of the five elemental states of Matter, the liquid. Such a reference would be entirely irrelevant in the context."

### Verses 6 and 7: Self realization

यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतानि आत्मन्येवानुपश्यति ।
सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विजुगुप्सते ॥

***yastu sarvani bhutani atmani evanupashyati,***

***sarvabhuteshu chatmanam tato na vijugupsate.***

But he who sees everywhere the Self in all existences and all existences in the Self, shrinks not thereafter from aught.

यस्मिन्सर्वाणि भूतानि आत्मैवाभूद्विजानतः ।
तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥

***yasmin sarvani bhutani atmaivabhut vijanatah,***

***tatra ko mohah kah shoka ekatvam anupashyatah.***

*He in whom it is the Self-Being that has become all existences that are Becomings, for he has the perfect knowledge, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have grief who sees everywhere oneness?*

For Such a one [who sees everywhere the self] there is no Conflict and Sorrow for "all grief is born of the shrinking of the ego from the contacts of existence, its sense of fear, weakness, dislike, etc., and this is born from the delusion of separate existence, the sense of being my separate ego exposed to all these contacts of so much that is not myself; Get rid of this, see oneness everywhere, be the One manifesting Himself in all creatures; ego will disappear; desire born of the sense of not being this, not having that, will disappear; the free inalienable delight of the One in His own existence will take the place of desire and its satisfactions and dissatisfactions." (Sri Aurobindo)

That is not all. The truth of Brahman in manifestation is not confined to the subjective projection as the Self of all things. It is not merely an impersonal Being in which the becoming takes place. Brahman is also He, the Person who originates, inhabits and governs the Universe.

### Verse 8: The Lord

स पर्यगाच्छुक्रमकायमव्रणमस्नाविरꣳ शुद्धमपापविद्धम् ।
कविर्मनीषी परिभूः स्वयंभूः याथातथ्यतोऽर्थान् व्यदधाच्छाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः ॥

***sa paryagach chhukram akayam avranam asnaviram shuddham apapaviddham,***

***kavir manishi paribhuh swayambhuh yathatathyato arthan vyadadhach chhashvatibhyah samabhyah.***

It is He that has gone abroad—That which is bright, bodiless, without scar of imperfection, without sinews, pure, unpierced by evil.

The Seer, the Thinker, the One who becomes everywhere, the Self-existence has ordered objects perfectly according to their nature from years sempiternal.

In his *going abroad,* i.e. in his self-extension there are, it should be noted, two aspects: one, I an Infinite Immutability and the other, Mutation, a working out of possibilities in Time, Space and Causality. The Upanishad speaks of the former—the Pure Immutable as the bright, self-luminous without a shadow, bodiless, unlimited by form and division, without scar of imperfection and sinews, flawless, unaffected by the play of clashing circumstances and not subject to the currents and cross currents of diminution and increase, Pure and unpierced by evil, i.e. not contaminated by Ignorance and its issue, the wrong, the crooked as opposed to what is normally right and straight. The same Absolute is spoken of in the other aspect successively, as the Kavi, the Seer, who before he proceeds to

manifest *sees* in his luminous vision the Truth the Principles of things that are to manifest, then, as the Manishi, Thinker, who Conceives and thinks out the processes in the evolution of the possibilities, the Paribhu, He who eventuates *becomes everywhere,* in Space and Time as impelled by the Manishi. It is all, it must be noted, a one becoming of the Self-existent Purusha who moves into these, three poises, seeing, conceiving and fixing things in accord with the Truth which is being expressed, the eternal Truth which forms and. governs the nature of earth formation as its innate Law.

Thus the Movement has its truth as much as the Stability; multiplicity is as real as unity. Both are twin ends of the one pole of Reality in manifestation and should be comprehended as such. To ignore or deny one and accept and pursue only the other is to shut oneself from the full reality of things. To accept the truth of both in a large vision and seek to realize it in one's own life is the path of wisdom.

### Verses 9, 10 and 11: Knowledge and Ignorance (avidya)

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति ये अविद्यामुपासते ।
ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ विद्यायाꣳ रताः ॥

***andham tamah pravishanti ye avidyam upasate,***

***tato bhuya iva te tamo ya u vidyayan ratah.***

*Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Ignorance,*

*they as if into a greater darkness enter who devote themselves to the Knowledge alone.*

अन्यदेवाहुर्विद्यया अन्यदाहुरविद्यया ।
इति शुश्रुम धीराणां ये नस्तद्विचचक्षिरे ॥

***anyadevahur vidyaya anyadahur avidyaya,***

***iti shushruma dhiranam ye nastadvimchachakshire.***

*Other, verily, it is said, is that which comes by the Knowledge, other that which comes by the Ignorance;*

*this is the lore we have received from the wise who revealed That to our understanding.*

विद्यां चाविद्यां च यस्तद्वेदोभयꣳसह ।

अविद्यया मृत्युं तीर्त्वा विद्ययाऽमृतमश्नुते ॥

***vidyam cha avidyam yastad vedobhayan saha,***

***avidyaya mrthyum tirtva vidyayamrtamashnute.***

*He who knows That as both in one, the Knowledge and the Ignorance,*

*by the Ignorance crosses beyond death and by the Knowledge enjoys Immortality.*

Knowledge, *vidya* Sri Aurobindo explains, is the consciousness, the effective awareness of the Unity of things the Oneness of all. Ignorance, *avidya* is the consciousness of multiplicity. Those who are aware of only the multiplicity of forms and not their reconciling oneness and live in line with that understanding are closed to the light of true knowledge and sink into obscurity. But those who look only at the Unity of' things, the sheer oneness alone, denying the fact of the Many, withdraw themselves gradually from the scene of life-activity and merge into a state of non-being, a state of consciousness where everything is, as if, *iva*, a, blank of still greater darkness. [This sense of *iva* in verse 9 seems to be left out in the commentary of Shankara; there it is explained as *eva,* verily. The point is that this state attained by the pursuit of sheer unity alone is so void, that its emptiness resembles—though, be it noted, it is not the same—in its benumbing blankness, the darkness of Ignorance raised to a degree]

"Those who are devoted entirely to the principle of indiscriminate Unity and seek to put away from them the integrality of the Brahman, also put away from them knowledge and completeness and enter as if into a greater darkness. They enter into some special state and accept it for the whole, mistaking exclusion in consciousness for transcendence in consciousness. They ignore by choice of knowledge, as the others are ignorant by compulsion of error. Knowing all to transcend all is the right path of Vidya. Although a higher state than the other, this supreme Night is termed a greater darkness, because the lower is one of chaos from which reconstitution is always possible, the higher is a conception of Void or Asat, an attachment to non-existence of Self from which it is more difficult to return to fulfillment of Self".

But rightly pursued and realized, the results of Knowledge and Ignorance, says the Upanishad, are different. They are both related to each other. Multiplicity is supported and sustained by the underlying Unity and Unity is realized in its full

potential, only *vis-a-vis* the multiplicity. The Many, the manifestation in diversity provides the field for the soul to live and row in the experience of a multitudinous becoming—in all its richness—and arrive progressively at a point where the impact of multiplicity begins to be informed and regulated by the consciousness of the governing Unity—Vidya. When one realizes this Knowledge, not only in the mind but in other parts of the being, specially related to life-activity, the knot of Ignorance, the sense of separativity is lost and the range of one's conscious-ness begins to transcend the barriers of the normal human existence—physical and other,—in a word, it partakes of immortality. This is the truth seen by the ancients, the *dhiras* who saw 'steadfast in the gaze of their thought' and revealed widely, comprehensively, to the seers of the Upanishad, *vichachakshire.*

So also, birth and non-birth, acceptance of manifestation and withdrawal from manifestation, are truths which yield their full value only when taken together and lead to disastrous results if followed exclusively.

### Verses 12, 13 and 14: Birth and Non Birth

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽसंभूतिमुपासते ।
ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ संभूत्याᳪ रताः ।।

***andham tamah pravishanti ye asambhuutim upasate,***

***tato bhuya eva te tamo ya u sambhutyam ratah.***

*Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Non-Birth,*

*they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Birth alone.*

अन्यदेवाहुः संभवादन्यदाहुरसंभवात् ।
इति शुश्रुम धीराणां ये नस्तद्विंचचक्षिरे ।।

***anya devahuh sambhavad anyadahur asambhavat,***

***iti shushruma dhiranam ye nastad vimchachakshire.***

Other, verily, it is said, is that which comes by the birth, other that which comes by the Non-Birth;

this is the lore we have received from the wise who revealed That to our understanding.

संभूतिं च विनाशं च यस्तद्वेदोभयꣳसह ।
विनाशेन मृत्युं तीर्त्वा संभूत्याऽमृतमश्नुते ॥

***sambhutim cha vinasham cha yastad vedobhayan saha,***

***vinashena mrthyum tirtva sambhutya amrtam ashnute.***

*He who knows That as both in one, the Birth and the dissolution of Birth,*

*by the dissolution crosses beyond death and by the Birth enjoys Immortality.*

*Sambhuti* and *Asambhuti,* Birth and Non-Birth, Sri Aurobindo clarifies, are not so much conditions of the body as states of the soul. One who chooses the state of Non-Birth rejects Birth and the line of manifestation and prepares himself to withdraw into a non-being, goes to a Nihil, a Void where all is blank. But he who is content to remain in the Birth alone, in the field of multiplicity and movement, without realizing the saving truth of freedom and transcendence from Birth, goes under in an abysm of darkness. Both Birth and Non-Birth are facts of Existence, and both are to be integrated in oneself.

The lynch-pin that holds together the continually changing movements and experiences in the normal life of the individual is the ego-sense. When that is dissolved the main prop of the life in ignorance is destroyed, *vinasha.*

It does not mean the, end of the body; the physical frame can very well continue after the death of the ego. The seeker breaks the bonds imposed by the self-limiting ego, the subjection to incapacity, limitation and desire which are the agents of death. And once he realizes this freedom, the seeker after the integral truth of manifestation accepts the Birth: the soul chooses to participate in the general manifestation in order to more fully enjoy its freedom. As Sri Aurobindo says, "it is enjoyed by a free and divine becoming in the universe and not outside the universe; for there it is always possessed, but here in the material it is to be worked out and enjoyed by the divine Inhabitant under circumstances that are in appearance the most opposite to its terms, in the of life the individual and in the multiple life of the universe."

Thus "Through Avidya. the Multiplicity, lies our path out of the transitional egoistic self-expression in which death and suffering predominate; through Vidya consenting with Avidya by the perfect sense of oneness even in that multiplicity, we enjoy integrally the immortality and the beatitude. By attaining to the Unborn beyond all becoming we are liberated from this lower birth and death; by

accepting the Becoming freely as the Divine, we invade mortality with the immortal beatitude and become luminous centres of its conscious self-expression in humanity." [Sri Aurobindo, The Life Divine, Vol. 1, ch. V].

This is the thought-movement in the Upanishad so far. The opening lines lay it down that this universe of movement is governed by the One inhabiting Spirit. The object of this manifestation is enjoyment and right living consisting in one's full participation in this enjoyment which is truly possible only when there is an inner renunciation of Desire. This done, activity ceases to bind the doer who is one in soul with the Lord of All. Those who do not follow this rightful course of life not only miss enjoyment here on earth, but go to worlds of darkness after death. The multiple Movement and the One Stability, are the same Brahman in different poises. Brahman the Reality is both and beyond both. Man realizes his unity with the rest of his fellow-beings only in proportion as he gains his identity with this cosmic and transcendental Self who is extended *as* and in *all.* In this unity are true harmony and happiness achieved displacing the elements of friction, grief, and illusion which are the results of a false sense of separativity born of ego. Life is a manifestation of God. The universe is really an unfoldment of the Spirit; it is the Supreme who has gone abroad and "has unrolled the universe in His three modes as All-Seer of the Truth of things, Thinker-out of their possibilities, Realiser of their actualities. He has determined all things sovereignly in their own nature, development and goal from years sempiternal." Vidya and Avidya, consciousness of the inherent unity and the consciousness of the phenomenal multiplicity, are twin powers of this Manifestation, each complementary—and not contradictory to the other and when a right use is made of both, they carry the individual on their wings towards a supreme fulfillment. So also are Birth and Non-Birth; they are not opposite and irreconcilable; they are two states of the being, each necessary to the completeness of the other and a realization of both the states is indispensable, if the object of Manifestation, Immortality, is to be achieved.

To fulfill this aim, to arrive at this Goal of Beatitude with all the opulence of Knowledge, Power and Joy that go with it, the Upanishad invokes the aid of the Gods, the famed guardians of Immortality. It proceeds to call Surya, the God of Illumination and Agni, the Lord of divine Will and Action.

Verses 15 and 16: The worlds - Surya

हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् ।
तत्त्वं पूषन्नापावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥

***hiranmayena patrena satyasyapihitam mukham,***

***tat tvam pushann apavrnu satyadharmaya drshtaye.***

*The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove, O Fosterer, for the law of the Truth, for sight.*

पूषन्नेकर्षे यम सूर्य प्रजापत्य व्यूह रश्मीन्समूह तेजो ।
यत्ते रूपं कल्याणतमं तत्ते पश्यामि योऽसावसौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि ॥

***pushannekarshe yama surya prajapatya vhyuha rashmin samuha tejo,***

***yat te rupam kalyanatamam tat te pashyami yo asavasau purushah so aham asmi.***

O Fosterer, O sole Seer, O Ordainer, O illumining Sun, O power of the Father of creatures, marshal thy rays, draw together thy light;

the Lustre which is thy most blessed form of all, that in Thee I behold. The Purusha there and there, He am I

"In the inner sense of the Veda, Surya, the Sun-God, represents the divine Illumination of the Kavi which exceeds mind and forms the pure self-luminous Truth of things. His principal power is self-revelatory knowledge, termed in the Veda 'Sight'. His realm is described as the Truth, the Law, the Vast. He is the Fosterer or Increaser, for he enlarges and opens man's dark and limited being into a luminous and infinite consciousness. He is the sole Seer, Seer of Oneness and Knower of the Self, and leads him to the highest Sight. He is Yama, Controller or Ordainer, for he governs man's action and manifested being by the direct Law of the Truth, *satyadharma*, and therefore by the right principle of our nature, *yathatathyatah*, a luminous power proceeding from the Father of all existence, he reveals in himself the divine Purusha of whom all beings are the manifestations. His rays are the thoughts that proceed luminously from the Truth, the Vast, but become deflected and distorted, broken up and disordered in the reflecting and dividing principle, Mind. They form there the golden lid which covers the face of the Truth. The Seer prays to Surya to cast them into right order and relation and then draw them together into the unity of relation and draw them together into the unity of revealed truth. The result of this inner process is the perception of the oneness of all beings in the divine Soul of this Universe". "This is Surya's goodliest form of all. For it is the supreme Light, the supreme Will, the supreme Delight of existence. This is the Lord, the Purusha, the self-conscient Being. When we have this vision, there is the integral self-knowledge, the Upanishad, *so'ham.* The Purusha there and there He am I ."

[*Sri Aurobindo:* Isha Upanishad, Verse 15 and Section VII. This verse is one of the most typical in the Upanishadic literature bringing out the close relation that exists between the Upanishads and the Veda. As noted earlier, the sages of the Upanishads always quote from the more ancient scripture in support, justification

or in clinching a line of thought they develop. The present verse is not only an instance to the point but much more valuable for the transparency with which it enables one to see how the thought development has taken place, how the Upanishads make explicit what was implicit in the Veda. The original Rik reads:

“There is a Truth covered by a Truth where they unyoke the horses of the Sun; the ten hundreds stood together, there was That One; I saw the greatest (best, most glorious) of the embodied gods.”

Compare this with the two verses of the Isha, under discussion. Drawing attention to this, Sir Aurobindo writes: “….mark how the seer of the Upanishad translates this thought or this mystic experience into his own later style, keeping the central symbol of the Sun but without any secrecy in the sense.. The golden lid (of the Upanishad) is meant to be the same as the inferior covering truth, *rtam,* spoken of in the Vedic verse; the ‘best of the bodies of the Gods’ is equivalent to the ‘fairest form of the Sun’, it is the supreme Light which is other and greater than all outer light; the great formula of the Upanishad, ‘He am I’ corresponds to that One, *tad ekam,* of the Rig Vedic verse; the 'standing together of the ten hundreds’ (the rays of the Sun, says Sayana, and that is evidently the meaning) is reproduced in the prayer to the Sun ‘to marshal and mass his rays’ so that the supreme from may be seen. The Sun in both the passages as constantly in the Veda and frequently in the Upanishad, is the Godhead of the supreme Truth and Knowledge and his rays are the light emanating from that supreme Truth and Knowledge. It is clear from this instance—and there are others—that the seer of the Upanishad had a truer sense of the meaning of the ancient Veda than the mediaeval ritualistic commentator with his gigantic learning, much truer than the modern and very different mind of the European scholars.” *(Hymns to the Mystic Fire, Pp. XVIII-XIX)*

In his Commentary on the Rig Veda, Sir Kapali Sastriar has gone into this interesting parallel in greater detail and has shown how close is the thought of the Upanishad to the spirit of the Vedic mantra. He also points out other instances, e.g., R.V. I.25.3 in the Samhita which contain the seeds of the perception that found its full unveiled expression in this verse of the Isha Upanishad.

### Verses 17 and 18: Action and the Divine Will (Agni)

वायुरनिलममृतमथेदं भस्मान्तꣳ शरीरम् ।
ॐ क्रतो स्मर कृतꣳ स्मर क्रतो स्मर कृतꣳ स्मर ॥

***vayuranilam amrtam athedam bhasmantam shariram,***

***om krato smara krtam smara krato smara krtam smara.***

The Breath of things is an immortal Life, but of this body ashes are the end.

OM! O Will, remember, that which was done, remember! O Will, remember, that which was done, remember.

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान् विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।
युयोध्यस्मज्जुहुराणमेनो भूयिष्ठां ते नमउक्तिं विधेम ॥

***agne naya supatha raye asman vishvani deva vayunani vidvan,***

***yuyodhyasmaj juhuranameno bhuyishtham te namauktim vidhema.***

O God Agni, knowing all things that are manifested, lead us by the good path to the felicity;

remove from us the devious attraction of sin. To thee completest speech of submission we would dispose.

Through the grace and the intervention of Surya the mind of man grows into illumination. But Knowledge is not all. There has to be a corresponding upliftment and enlargement of the faculties of action. They too should be liberated from the limitations under which they labour. But the body, the physical frame of man is circumscribed on all sides and subject to the conditions of birth and death over which, he has little control. However, there is, says the seer, a power active in the body, the dynamism of life-energy which is the effective source and executor of all action and that in its true nature—which is revealed in the light of the Surya, the Lord of illumination,—is immortal. To manifest this Life-principle more and more and enable it to speed into its own untrammelled course of conquest and progress, the God of Life, Vayu (Matarishwan in an earlier verse) is remembered in prayer.

Normal human activity, however, proceeds under the drive and impulsion of Prakriti, Nature, which is shot through and through with Ignorance and revolves round the fulcrum of the ego. Man is a slave of this activity, he is rushed into it and becomes the creature instead of its master he is meant to be. It is only in proportion as he awakens to the liberating knowledge and releases himself from the hold of the lower ignorant nature that he is in a position to disengage himself from this thralldom and assume his rightful place. He begins to see that behind all action there is a secret Will leading things to a destined goal. Whatever may be the apparent motives and circumstances which govern activities there is at

their base a secret Will and Power whose origin is deeper than the surface nature. This is the *kratu,* the Divine Will which is called Agni in the Veda—the Will which motivates and executes, with its dynamic power, in the universe as well as in the individual. "He is the divine force which manifests first in matter as heat and light and material energy and then, taking different forms in the other principles of man's consciousness, leads him by a progressive manifestation upwards to the Truth and Bliss." One has to realise this truth in one's own being; gain oneness with this secret spring of Movement if one hopes to acquire control and direction over all one's activities. The seer calls upon, this God Agni to come into his own, retain the thread of continuity in the actions put forth in this life-time and before, and relate them in the walking consciousness also in the right sequence, so that the control ensuing from a conscious coordination of doings may perfect itself. This the Agni can do, because being at the fount of manifestation on earth, he *knows;* he knows the truth of all that is born, *jaatavedas,* the Intention governing all activities; and knowing, he also sees the direct way in which things lead to their fulfillment.

Amidst the maze of ways and byways with which course of man's life is strewn, he knows which is the straight Path. Caught up in the web of ignorance and false-hood, impelled by the goad of conflicting desires and passions, man turns and deflects, loses sight of the good and the obvious direction. This is pull of *sin* which man suffers and which keeps him away from the natural, the straight course.

As Sri Aurobindo states: "Sin, in the conception of the Veda, from which this verse is taken bodily, is that which excites and hurries the faculties into deviation from the good path. There is a straight road or road of naturally increasing light and truth, *rjuh pantha, rtasya pantha*, leading over infinite levels and towards infinite vistas, *vitani, prsthani*, by which the law of our nature should normally take us towards our fulfillment. Sin compels it instead to travel with stumblings amid uneven and limited tracts and along crooked windings *duritani, vrjinani.*

The seer invokes the aid of Agni to pass beyond the range of this sin and to that end offers “completest submission and the self-surrender of all the faculties of the lower egoistic human nature to the divine Will-force, Agni, so that, free from internal opposition, it may lead the soul of man through the truth towards a felicity full of the spiritual riches, *raye*." ( Sir Aurobindo)

It hardly needs to be pointed out that these four crowning verses are not the last prayer of a dying man* as taken by some, but powerful invocations from the seeker who has by dint of lifelong effort arrived at a crucial stage when the intervention from the very Gods alone can enable him to surmount the last barriers, uplift him and open still higher vistas of Light and Power leading to the

final goal of Immortality while living on earth for a full span of life, for a hundred years, *Satam samah.*

*Who is preparing, to shed the body to dissolve into the material elements, and to merge the breath in the primary Prana, summoning up the accumulated *puNya* of rituals performed during his life, and with speech-which is all that is left to him at that moment as means of worship—pleads to God Agni to lead him by the bright path—the *devayana*—to his destination in the Brahmaloka.

## Principles of Ishavasyopanishat

### Isha's Resolution of the Opposites and The Principle of Isha Upanishad

This excerpt is from 'Isha Upanishad' by Sri Aurobindo

(courtesy of Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust)

The pairs of **OPPOSITES** successively taken up by the Upanishad and resolved are, in the order of their succession:

These discords are successively resolved:

The principle it follows throughout is the uncompromising reconciliation of uncompromising extremes. Later thought took one series of terms, the World, Enjoyment, Action, the Many, Birth, the Ignorance, and gave them a more and more secondary position, exalting the opposite series, God, Renunciation, Quietism, the One, Cessation of Birth, the Knowledge until this trend of thought culminated in Illusionism and the idea of existence in the world as a snare and a meaningless burden imposed inexplicably on the soul by itself, which must be cast aside as soon as possible. It ended in a violent cutting of the knot of the great enigma. This Upanishad tries instead to get hold of the extreme ends of the knots, disengage and place them alongside of each other in a release that will be at the same time a right placing and relation. It will not qualify or subordinate unduly any of the extremes, although it recognizes a dependence of one on the other. Renunciation is to go to the extreme, but also enjoyment is to be equally integral; Action has to be complete and ungrudging, but also freedom of the soul from its works must be absolute; Unity, utter and absolute, is the goal, but this absoluteness has to be brought to its highest term by including in it the whole infinite multiplicity of things.

So great is this scruple in the Upanishad that having so expressed itself in the formula "By the ignorance having crossed over death, by the knowledge one enjoys Immortality" that life in the world might be interpreted as only a preliminary to an existence beyond, it at once rights the balance by reversing the order in the parallel formula "By dissolution having crossed over death by birth one enjoys immortality", and thus makes life itself the field of the immortal existence which is the goal and aspiration of all life. In this conclusion it agrees with the early vedic thought which believed all the worlds and existence and non-existence and death and life and immortality to be here in the embodied human being, there evolvement, there realizable and to be possessed and enjoyed, not dependent either for acquisition or enjoyment on the renunciation

of life and bodily existence. This thought has never entirely passed out of Indian philosophy, but has become secondary and a side admission not strong enough to qualify seriously the increasing assertion of the extinction of mundane existence as the condition of our freedom and our sole wise and worthy aim.

## The Conscious Lord and Phenomenal Nature

Phenomenal Nature is a movement of the conscious Lord. The object of the movement is to create forms of His consciousness in motion in which He as the one soul in many bodies can take up his habitation and enjoy the multiplicity and the movement with all their relations. [This is also the view of the Gita and generally accepted.]

## Renunciation and Enjoyment

Real integral enjoyment of all this movement and multiplicity in its truth and in its infinity depends upon an absolute renunciation; but the renunciation intended is an absolute renunciation of the principle of desire founded on the principle of egoism and not a renunciation of world-existence. [This, again, is the central standpoint of the Gita, which, however, admits also the renunciation of world-existence. The general trend of Vedantic thought would accept the renunciation of desire and egoism as the essential but would hold that renunciation of egoism means the renunciation of all world-existence, for it sees desire and not Ananda as the cause of world-existence.] This solution depends on the idea that desire is only a egoistic and vital deformation of the divine Ananda or delight of being from which the world is born; by expiration of ego and desire Ananda again becomes the conscious principle of existence. This substitution is the essence of the change from life in death to life in immortality. The enjoyment of the infinite delight of existence free from ego, founded on oneness of all in the Lord, is what is meant by the enjoyment of immortality.

## Action in Nature and Freedom in the Soul

Actions are not inconsistent with the soul's freedom. Man is not bound by works, but only seems to be bound. He has to recover the consciousness of his inalienable freedom by recovering the consciousness of unity in the Lord, unity in himself, unity with all existence. [This truth would, again, be generally admitted, but not the conclusion that is drawn from it.] This done, life and works can and

should be accepted in their fullness; for the manifestation of the Lord in life and works is the law of our being and the object of our world-existence.

### The One Stable Brahman and the Multiple Movement

What then of the Quiescence of the Supreme Being and how is persistence in the movement compatible with that Quiescence which is generally recognized as an essential condition of the supreme Bliss?

The Quiescence and the Movement are equally one Brahman and the distinction drawn between them is only a phenomenon of our consciousness. So it is with the idea of space and time, the far and the near, the subjective and the objective, internal and external, myself and others, one and many. Brahman, the real existence, is all these things to our consciousness, but in it ineffably superior to all such practical distinctions. The movement is a phenomenon of the Quiescence, the Quiescence itself may be conceived as a Movement too rapid for the Gods, that is to say, for our various functions of consciousness to follow in its real nature. But it is no formal, material, spatial, temporal movement, and only a movement in consciousness. Knowledge sees it all as one, ignorance divides and creates oppositions where there is no opposition but simply relations of one consciousness in itself. The ego in the body says, "I am within, all else is outside; and in what is outside, this is near to me in Time and Space, that is far." All this is true in present relation; but in essence it is all one indivisible movement of Brahman which is not material movement but a way of seeing things in the one consciousness.

### Being and Becoming

Everything depends on what we see, how we look at existence in our soul's view of things. Being and Becoming, One and Many are both true and are both the same thing: Being is one, Becomings are many; but this simply means that all Becomings are one Being who places Himself variously in the phenomenal movement of His consciousness. We have to see the One Being, but we have not to cease to see the many Becomings, for they exist and are included in Brahman's view of Himself. Only, we must see knowledge and not with ignorance. We have to realize our true self as the one unchangeable, indivisible Brahman. We have to see all becomings as developments of the movement in our true self and this self as one inhabiting all bodies and not our body only. We have to be consciously, in our relations with this world, what we really are, —this one self becoming everything that we observe. All the movement, all energies,

all forms, all happenings we must see as those of our one and real self in many existences, as the play of the Will and Knowledge and Delight of the Lord in His world-existence.

We shall then be delivered from egoism and desire and the sense of separate existence and therefore from all grief and delusion and shrinking; for all grief is born of the shrinking of the ego from the contacts of existence, its sense of fear, weakness, want, dislike, etc.; and this is born from the delusion of separate existence, the sense of being my separate ego exposed to all these contacts of so much that is not myself. Get rid of this, see oneness everywhere, be the One manifesting Himself in all creatures; ego will disappear; desire born of the sense of not being this, not having that, will disappear; the free inalienable delight of the One in His own existence will take the place of desire and its satisfactions and dissatisfactions. [In the ordinary view all this would be admitted, but the practical possibility of maintaining this state of consciousness and birth in the together would be doubted.] Immortality will be yours, death born of division will be overcome.

### The Active Lord and the indifferent Akshara Brahman

The Inactive and the Active Brahman are simply two aspects of the one Self, the one Brahman, who is the Lord. It is He who has gone abroad in the movement. He maintains Himself free from all modifications in His inactive existence. The inaction is the basis of the action and exists in the action; it is His freedom from all He does and becomes and in all He does and becomes. These are the positive and negative poles of one indivisible consciousness. We embrace both in one quiescence and one movement, inseparable from each other, dependent on each other. The quiescence exists relatively to the movement, the movement to quiescence. He is beyond both. This is a different point of view from that of the identity of the Movement and Quiescence which are one in reality; it expresses rather their relation in our consciousness once they are admitted as a practical necessity of that consciousness. It is obvious that we also by becoming one with the Lord would share in this biune conscious existence. [In the ordinary view the jiva cannot exist in both at the same time; his dissolution is into the Quiescence and not into unity with the lord in the action and inaction.]

### Vidya and Avidya

The knowledge of the One and the knowledge of the Many are a result of the movement of the one consciousness, which sees all things as one in their truth-

idea but differentiates them in their mentality and formal becoming. If the mind (*manishi*) absorbs itself in God as the formal becoming (*paribhu*) and separates itself from God in the true Idea (*kavi*), then it loses Vidya, the knowledge of the One, and has only the knowledge of the Many which becomes no longer knowledge at all but ignorance, Avidya. This is the cause of the separate ego-sense.

Avidya is accepted by the Lord in the Mind (*manishi*) in order to develop individual relations to their utmost in all the possibilities of division and its consequences and then through these individual relations to come back individually to the knowledge of the One in all. That knowledge has remained all along unabrogated in the consciousness of the true seer or Kavi. This seer in ourselves stands back from the mental thinker; the latter, thus separated, has to conquer death and division by a developing experiences as the individual Inhabitant and finally to recover by the reunited knowledge of the One and the Many the state of Immortality. This is our proper course and not either to devote ourselves exclusively to the life of Avidya or to reject it entirely for motionless absorption in the One.

## Birth and Non-Birth

The reason for this double movement of the Thinker is that we intended to realize immortality in the Birth. The self is uniform and undying and in itself always possesses immortality. It does not need to descend into Avidya and Birth to get that Immortality of Non-Birth; for it possesses it always. It descends in order to realize and possess it as the individual Brahman in the play of world-existence. It accepts Birth and Death, assumes the ego and then dissolving the ego by the recovery of unity realizes itself as the Lord, the One, and Birth as only a becoming of the Lord in mental and formal being; this becoming is now governed by the true sight of the Seer and, once this is done, becoming is no longer inconsistent with Being, birth becomes a means and not an obstacle to the enjoyment of immortality by the lord of this formal habitation. [This is the stumbling-block to the ordinary philosophies which are impregnated with the idea of the illusoriness of the world, even when they do not go the whole way with the Mayavada; Birth, they would say, is a play of ignorance, it cannot subsist along with entire knowledge.]

This is our proper course and not to remain for ever in the chain of birth and death, nor to flee from birth into a pure non-becoming. The bondage does not consist in the physical act of becoming, but in the persistence of the ignorant sense of the separate ego. The Mind creates the chain and not the body.

## Works and Knowledge

The opposition between works and knowledge exists as long as works and knowledge are only of the egoistic mental character. Mental knowledge is not true knowledge; True knowledge is that which is based on the true sight, the sight of the Seer, of Surya, of the Kavi. Mental thought is not knowledge, it is a golden lid placed over the face of the Truth, the Sight, the divine Ideation, the Truth-Consciousness. When that is removed, sight replaces mental thought, the all-embracing truth-ideation, *mahas, veda, drshti,* replaces the fragmentary mental activity. True Buddhi (*vijnana*) emerges from the dissipated action of the Buddhi which is all that is possible on the basis of the sense-mind, the Manas. Vijnana leads us to pure knowledge (*jnana*), pure consciousness (*chit*). There we realize our entire identity with the Lord in all at the very roots of our being.

But in Chit, Will and Seeing are one. Therefore in Vijnana or truth-ideation also which comes luminously out of Chit, Will and Sight are combined and no longer as in the mind separated from each other. Therefore when we have the sight and live in the Truth-Consciousness, our will becomes the spontaneous law of the truth in us and, knowing all its acts and their sense and objective, leads straight to the human goal, which was always the enjoyment of the Ananda, the Lord's delight in self-being, the state of immortality. In our acts also we become one with all beings and our life grows into a representation of oneness, truth and divine joy and no longer proceeds on the crooked path of egoism full of division, error and stumbling. In a word, we attain to the object of our existence which is to manifest in itself whether on earth in a terrestrial body and against the resistance of Matter or in the worlds beyond or enter beyond all world the glory of the divine Life and the divine Being.

## The Knowledge of Brahman

The knower of Brahman reaches that which is supreme. This is that verse which was spoken;

"Truth, Knowledge, Infinity the Brahman,

He who knows that hidden in the secrecy in the supreme ether,

Enjoyed all desires along with the wise-thinking Brahman."

This is the burden of the opening sentences of the Taittiriya Upanishad's second section; they begin its elucidation of the highest truth. Or in-the Sanskrit,

ब्रह्मविद् आप्नोति परम्
तद् एषाभ्युक्ता सत्यं ज्ञानम् अनन्तं ब्रह्म
यो वेद निहितं गुहायां परमे व्योमन्
सोऽश्नुते सर्वान् कामान् सह ब्रह्मणा विपश्चितेति ।

***brahmavid apnoti param***

***tad eshabhyukta satyam jnanam anantam brahma***

***yo veda nihitam guhayam parame vyoman***

***soshnute sarvan kaman saha brahmana vipaschiteti.***

But what is Brahman? Whatever reality is in existence, by which all the rest subsists, that is Brahman. An Eternal behind all instabilities, a Truth of things which is implied, if it is hidden in all appearances, a Constant which supports all mutations, but is not increased, diminished, abrogated, - there is such an unknown X which makes existence a problem, our own self a mystery, the universe a riddle. If we were only what we seem to be to our normal self-awareness, there would be no mystery; if the world were only what it can be made out to be by the perceptions of the senses and their strict analysis in the reason, there would be no riddle; and if to take our life as it is now and the world as it has so far developed to our experience were the whole possibility of our knowing and doing, there would be no problem. Or at best there would be but a shallow mystery, an easily solved riddle, the problem only of a child's puzzle. But there is more, and that more is the hidden head of the Infinite and the secret heart of the Eternal. It is the highest and this highest is the all; there is none beyond and there is none other than it. To know it is to know the highest and by knowing the highest to know all. For as it is the beginning and source of

all things, so everything else is its consequence; as it is the support and constituent of all things, so the secret of everything else is explained by its secret; as it is the sum and end of all things, so everything else amounts to it and by throwing itself into it achieves the sense of its own existence.

This is the Brahman.

If this unknown be solely an indecipherable, only indefinable X, always unknown and unknowable, the hidden never revealed, the secret never opened to us, then our mystery would for ever remain a mystery, our riddle insoluble, our problem intangible. Its existence, even while it determines all we are, know and do, could yet make no practical difference to us; for our relation to it would then be a blind and helpless dependence, a relation binding us to ignorance and maintainable only by that ignorance. Or again, if it be in some way knowable, but the sole result of knowledge were an extinction or cessation of our being, then within our being it could have no consequences; the very act and fluctuation of knowledge would bring the annihilation of all that we now are, not its completion or fulfillment. The mystery, riddle, problem would not be so much solved as abolished, for it would lose all its data. In effect we should have to suppose that there is an eternal and irreconcilable opposition between Brahman and what we now are, between the supreme cause and all its effects or between the supreme source and all its derivations. And it would then seem that all that the Eternal originates, all he supports, all he takes back to himself is a denial or contradiction of his being which, though in itself a negative of that which alone is, has yet in some way become a positive. The two could not coexist in consciousness; if he allowed the world to know him, it would disappear from being.

But the Eternal is knowable, He defines himself so that we may seize him, and man can become, even while he exists as man and in this world and in this body, a knower of the Brahman.

The knowledge of the Brahman is not a thing luminous but otiose, informing to the intellectual view of things but without consequence to the soul of the individual or his living; it is a knowledge that is a power and a divine compulsion to change; by it his existence gains something that now he does not possess in consciousness. What is this gain? It is this that he is conscious now in a lower state only of his being, but by knowledge he gains his highest being.

The highest state of our being is not a denial, contradiction and annihilation of all that we now are; it is a supreme accomplishment of all things that our present existence means and aims at, but in their highest sense and in the eternal values.

To live in our present state of self-consciousness is to live and to act in ignorance. We are ignorant of ourselves, because we know as yet only that in us which changes always, from moment to moment, from hour to hour, from period to period, from life to life, and not that in us which is eternal. We are ignorant of the world because we do not know God; we are aware of the law of appearances, but not of the law and truth of being.

Our highest wisdom, our minutest most accurate science, our most effective application of knowledge can be at most a thinning of the veil of ignorance, but not a going beyond it, so long as we do not get at the fundamental knowledge and the consciousness to which that is native. The rest are effective for their own temporal purposes, but prove ineffective in the end, because they do not bring to the highest good; they lead to no permanent solution of the problem of existence.

The ignorance in which we live is not a baseless and wholesale falsehood, but at its lowest the misrepresentation of a Truth, at its highest an imperfect representation and translation into inferior and to that extent misleading values. It is a knowledge of the superficial only and therefore a missing of the secret essential which is the key to all that the superficial is striving for; a knowledge of the finite and apparent, but a missing of all that the apparent symbolizes and the finite suggests; a knowledge of inferior forms, but a missing of all that our inferior life and being has above it and to which it must aspire if it is to fulfill its greatest possibilities. The true knowledge is that of the highest, the inmost, the infinite. The knower of the Brahman sees all these lower things in the light of the Highest, the external and superficial as a translation of the internal and essential, the finite from the view of the Infinite. He begins to see and know existence no longer as the thinking animal, but as the Eternal sees and knows it. Therefore he is glad and rich in being, luminous in joy, satisfied of existence.

Knowledge does not end with knowing, nor is it pursued and found for the sake of knowing alone. It has its full value only when it leads to some greater gain than itself, some gain of being. Simply to know the eternal and to remain in the pain, struggle and inferiority of our present way of being, would be a poor and lame advantage.

A greater knowledge opens the possibility and, if really possessed, brings the actuality of a greater being. To be is the first verb which contains all the others; knowledge, action, creation, enjoyment are only a fulfillment of being. Since we are incomplete in being, to grow is our aim, and that knowledge, action, creation, enjoyment are the best which most help us to expand grow, feel our existence.

Mere existence is not fullness of being. Being knows itself as power, consciousness, delight; a greater being means a greater power, consciousness and delight.

If by greater being we incurred only a greater pain and suffering, this good would not be worth having. Those who say that it is, mean simply that we get by it a greater sense of fulfillment which brings of itself a greater joy of the power of existence, and an extension of suffering or a loss of other enjoyment is worth having as a price for this greater sense of wideness, height and power. But this could not be the perfection of being or the highest height of its fulfillment; suffering is the seal of a lower status. The highest consciousness is integrally fulfilled in wideness and power of its existence, but also it is integrally fulfilled in delight.

The knower of Brahman has not only the joy of light, but gains something immense as the result of his knowledge, *brahma vid apnoti.*

What he gains is that highest, that which is supreme; he gains the highest being, the highest consciousness, the highest wideness and power of being, the highest delight; *brahmavid apnoti param.*

The Supreme is not something aloof and shut up in itself. It is not a mere indefinable, prisoner of its own featureless absoluteness, impotent to define, create, know itself variously, eternally buried in a sleep or a swoon of self-absorption. The Highest is the Infinite and the Infinite contains the All. Whoever attains the highest consciousness, becomes infinite in being and embraces the All.

To make this clear the Upanishad has defined the Brahman as the Truth, Knowledge, Infinity and has defined the result of the knowledge of Him in the secrecy, in the cave of being, in the supreme ether as the enjoyment of all its desires by the soul of the individual in the attainment of its highest self-existence.

Our highest state of being is indeed a becoming one with Brahman in his eternity and infinity, but it is also an association with him in delight of self-fulfillment, *ashnute saha brahmana*. And that principle of the Eternal by which this association is possible, is the principle of his knowledge, his self-discernment and all-discernment, the wisdom by which he knows himself perfectly in all the world and all beings, *brahmana vipaschita.*

Delight of being is the continent of all the fulfilled values of existence which we now seek after in the forms of desire. To know its conditions and possess it purely and perfectly is the infinite privilege of the eternal Wisdom.

ꕥ

## Exposition of Bliss (Taittiriya Upanishad 2.8)

Behold this exposition of the Bliss to which ye shall hearken. Let there be a young man, excellent and lovely in his youth, a great student; let him have fair manners and a most firm heart and great strength of body, and let all this wide earth be full of wealth for his enjoying. That is the measure of bliss of one human being. Now a hundred and a hundred-fold of the human measure of bliss, is one bliss of men that have become angels in heaven. And this is the bliss of the Veda wise whose soul the blight of desire not touches. A hundred and a hundred-fold of this measure of angelic bliss is one bliss of Gods that are angels in heaven. And this is the bliss of the Veda wise whose soul the blight of desire not touches. A hundred and a hundred-fold of this measure of divine angelic bliss is one bliss of the Fathers whose world of heaven is their world for ever. And this is the bliss of the Veda wise whose soul the blight of desire not touches. A hundred and a hundred-fold of this measure of bliss of the Fathers whose worlds are for ever, is one bliss of the Gods who are born as Gods in heaven. And this is the bliss of the Veda wise whose soul the blight of desire not touches. A hundred and a hundred-fold of this measure of bliss of the firstborn in heaven, is one bliss of the Gods of work who are Gods, for by the strength of their deeds they depart and are Gods in heaven. And this is the bliss of the Vedawise whose soul the blight of desire not touches. A hundred and a hundred-fold of this measure of bliss of the Gods of work, is one bliss of the great Gods who are Gods forever. And this is the bliss of the Vedawise whose soul the blight of desire not touches. A hundred and a hundred-fold of this measure of divine bliss, is one bliss of Indra, the King in Heaven. And this is the bliss of the Vedawise whose soul the blight of desire not touches. A hundred and a hundred-fold of this measure of Indra's bliss is one bliss of Brhaspati, who taught the Gods in heaven. And this is the bliss of the Vedawise whose soul the blight of desire not touches. A hundred and a hundred-fold of this measure of Brhaspati's bliss, is one bliss of Prajapati, the Almighty Father. And this is the bliss of the Vedawise whose soul the blight of desire not touches. A hundred and a hundred-fold of this measure of Prajapati's bliss, is one bliss of the Eternal Spirit. And this is the bliss of the Vedawise whose soul the blight of desire not touches.

The Spirit who is here in a man and the Spirit who is there in the Sun, it is one Spirit and there is no other. He who knows this, when he hath gone away from this world, passes to this Self which is of food; he passes to this Self which is of Prana; he passes to this Self which is of Mind; he passes to this Self which is of Knowledge; he passes to this Self which is of Bliss. Whereof this is the Scripture.

## Madhu Vidya or the Doctrine of Delight

The Madhu vidya or the doctrine of mystic honey is found in the 5th chapter of the second book of the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad which is itself part of the Shatapatha Brahmana. Often this Upanishad is quoted by some monists to demonstrate this world to be an, "utter illusion" and that world is irrelevant to the attainment of the highest spiritual experience called as *nirguna brahman.* Such passages upholding the, "lofty illusionism" are found in the *maitreyi brahmana* of the same Upanishad which precedes the Madhu Vidya chapter. Madhu Vidya provides the required corrective and teaches us that the, "diversity in creation is the manifestation of a secret delight, that all things, however heterogeneous and warring they may appear, are held together by a secret harmony effected in them by the hidden creative self delight of the supreme who is the effulgent self, immortal". The Upanishad states, "This earth is honey for all beings and all beings are honey for this earth- and he who is in this earth the effulgent, immortal *purusha* and he who is within one's being, in the body, the effulgent, immortal *purusha* are indeed the same. He who is this self, this immortal, this *brahman,* this all". It gives fourteen illustrations to reinforce the above statement. It further adds that, "this self does not merely represent the basic principle of *madhu,* the bliss that abides in the heart of things but he is the master of all things and beings and holds together all beings, all Gods, all worlds, all selves and all lives". Next the Upanishad quotes three verses of the Rigveda Samhita (1.116.2, 1.117.2, 6.47.18) stating that the doctrine of mystic honey given here is not new, but was already revealed to the sages of the Rigveda, specifically *dadhyan atharvan* by Ashvins, the twin powers. Sri Sayanacharya explains these verses by using a legend in the Shatapatha Brahmana involving the God Indra, Dadhyan, son of *Atharvan,* and the twin powers Ashvins. Sri Kapali Sastry explains that these verses make much more sense if they are interpreted along esoteric lines, using the clues supplied by the meanings of names of personages like Dadhyan Atharvan. The two parts of the word Dadhyan, *dadhi* and *anc*, gives us the meaning that, "it is a distinct lustrous power moving in the yield of Light fixed in the intellectual mind". Dadhyan, like the Atharvan or the Angirasa, is either a deified sage or humanized God. Ashvins are an inseparable dual Godhead who always appears together. The Ashvins embody the twin forces of harmony and beauty, health and joy. Their own archetypical interdependence and harmony in the cosmic functioning brings to bear on us the necessity of realizing the interdependence of things and beings, the balance and harmony that is preserved by a great unifying principle referred to as the *madhu.* It is the delight of being in all existence which explains and unfolds the necessity of diverse forms in the manifest existence and gives them their value. The particular chapter in the Upanishad closes with the following *Rig Vedic* verse due to the sage Bharadwaja RV (6.47.18), "To every form he has remained the counter form: that is his form for us to face and see. Indra by his

creative conscious powers (*maya* powers) moves on endowed with many forms; for yoked adore his thousand steeds". The purport is that just as we can make various objects having different shapes by pouring the sugary syrup into various moulds, all the different aspects of manifestation are made from the vital force and the moulds which are represented by Indra himself.

*Madhu* is interpreted by Shankara as the principle of mutual aid. The beginning line, "This earth is like *madhu* honey to all beings and all beings are like honey to this earth", is interpreted as follows by Shankara. "Honey is like effect; just as a beehive is made by a great many bees, so this earth is made by all beings. Thus all beings are the honey or effect of this earth."

## Vaishvanara or the Universal Divine

The next example is from the Vaishvanara vidya of the Chhandogya Upanishad and its connection to the Vaishvanara Agni mentioned in numerous hymns of the Rigveda. Even though all *sadhanas* of the Upanishads lead to the attainment of *brahmic* realization, their starting points, their approaches, and the results experienced on the way to realization may differ. *Sadhanas* may differ from one another in their emphasis on different aspects of *brahman.* The Vaishvanara vidya mentioned in the 5th book of Chhandogya begins with question, "what do you worship as the *atman"* posed by the teacher, the king Ashwapathy Kaikeya to eager students who approached him for the elucidation of the supreme realization. The teacher shows the limitations of various answers and teaches them about the universal person, Vaishvanara, who is adored as, "in all worlds, in all beings, in all selves, he eats the food". The teacher exhorts the students in the art of living in accord with the truths of Vaishvanara, the universal person. He enjoins them, "not to eat the food and live as if the *vaishvanara atman* were something separate, but to live and eat for living with the knowledge of Him as the one fire who lives aglow in all creatures". Such a person lives also for other souls, for other beings around, for the rest of the whole universe. His living is a source of joy and power to all living beings at all levels. He radiates wisdom and life-giving strength. The food he takes is an offering to the universal fire. This is the real-meaning of the fire-ritual. The text says that whosoever performs the fire-ritual without knowing its meaning is wasting his efforts like pouring his offering on ashes after removing the burning charcoal. As mentioned earlier, the Vaishvanara vidya directly draws its inspiration from the numerous hymns on the Vaishvanara Agni in the Rigveda. Sri Kapali Sastry gives a detailed discussion on this topic. We will content ourselves by giving references to some of the relevant hymns: Rigveda, (10.88, 1.59, 1.98.1, 3.3.2, 3.3.4, 3.26.7).

***sa sarveshu lokeshu sarveshu bhuteshu sarveshu atmasu annam atti.***

Ch. U (5.18.1), last line.

## Veda Quotations in Upanishads

There are numerous mantras of RV quoted verbatim in Upanishads. There are many key phrases in the Upanishads which have their corresponding ones in RV. A systematic study of the Veda and Upanishads has not been done. We give here just a few examples. The oft-quoted passage of Shvetashvatara Upanishad (2.5), "Here ye, children of immortality", occurs originally in Rigveda (10.13.1). The famous *hamsa* mantra of Katha Upanishad (2.2.2), "The swan that settles in the purity. . . born of truth,—itself the truth, the vast" occurs originally in RV (4.40.5). The famous mantra of the two birds signifying the individual soul and supreme soul found in Mundaka Upanishad (3.1.1) is originally from RV (1.164.20). It is hardly a coincidence since the word *suparna* translated as bird occurs in more than half a dozen verses of RV bearing always the symbol of soul. Some commentators often misinterpret the phrase two birds in RV as husband and wife. The famous utterance of Upanishad that *brahman* cannot be attained by duality is in RV (5.12.2). The idea that "*brahman* cannot be attained by mere action or effort" is in RV (8.70.3) and (5.48.5), "*brahman* cannot be approached by thought" RV (1.170.1) or Kena Upanishad (1.3).

The famous ecstatic utterance of the Rishi Vamadeva in RV (4.26.1) declaring that, "I am Surya, I am Manu. . ." is repeated in Brhadaranyaka Upanishad(1.4.10). The Aitareya U. (2.4) specifically mentions the mantra of the Rishi Vamadeva in RV (4.27.1) and the name of rishi also. The same Upanishad mentions Vamadeva in the third *adhyaya* also. The concept of the mystic heart centre *hrda* which occurs more than thirty times in RV is also found in several places in Upanishad. The triplet 'The heart, the mind and intellect' *hrdamanasa manisha* found in Katha Upanishad (6.9), Shvetashvatara Upanishad (13.3) etc., is originally in RV.

It is clearly notable that certain instructions given in the Upanishads have their basis in certain mantras of the Rigveda Samhita. Sri Aurobindo, the revealer of the secret of the Veda has cited an instance. He has shown how the passage from the Isha Upanishad verse, *hiranmayena patrena,* "golden lid. . . " and the *rik* RV (5.62.1), *"rtena rtam apihitam* . . . " are identical in meaning.

We may note that the Isha verse is also in the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad (5.15.1) and the Maitri Upanishad (6.35).

We shall first give the *rik* in the order of the *pada patha* and explain; then we shall proceed to show that the meaning of the *rik* fits in with that of the Upanishadic passage.

### The *rik* (5.62.1) of the seer *shrutavit atri*

***rtena rtam apihitam dhruvam vam***

***suryasya yatra vimuchanti ashvan***

***dasha shata saha tasthuh***

***tadekam devanam shreshtham vapusham apashyam.***

**Translation:**

"There is a truth *rtam* covered by a (inferior) truth

*rtena* where your place is secure,

where they unyoke the horses of sun;

the ten hundreds stood together,

where was that One, I saw the greatest of the embodied Gods" RV (5.62.1).

The import is clear: the highest eternal truth standing over, beyond is covered by the inferior truth of this creation; when this cover is removed, one comes face to face with the higher truth.

The translation given here is according to the esoteric view. We discuss in detail Sayana's translation based on the gross interpretation. Sayana translates the first *pada* of the mantra as "water covering the solar orb". He interprets the third *pada* in the mythological sense alluding to the imprisonment of the horses of the sun by *asuras* called *Mandeha.* Again his commentary illustrates his use of the mythological and naturalist ideas even though he claims to focus only on the ritualist ideas.

**Connection to Isha Upanishad (15, 16)**

Grasping the import of this *rik* the rishi of the Upanishad says in plain uncovered language:

"The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove, O Forester, for the law of the Truth, for sight".

***hiranmayena patrena satyapihitam mukham***

***tat tvam pushannapavrnu satyadharmaya drshtaye.***

O sole Seer, O ordainer, O illumining Sun, O power of the Father of creatures, marshal thy rays, draw together thy Light; the Lustre which is thy most blessed from of all, that in Thee I behold. The *purusha* there and there, He am I.

***pushannekarshe yama surya prajapatya vyuha rashmin samuha.***

***tejo yat te rupam kalyantamam tatte pashyami yo savasau purushah so ahamasmi***

(Tr. by Sri Aurobindo.)

We shall show how this mantra of the Upanishad fits in with that of the Rigveda.

In the Veda it is by the *inferior truth:* in the Upanishad, by *the golden lid*. Though, by reason of its inferiority, it acts as a covering, still it is essentially the truth and hence the covering lid is Truth and hence the covering lid is described as brilliant gold; *Truth (is) concealed in the Veda, the face of the truth is concealed in the Upanishad.*

In the Veda it is *the greatest of the embodied*, in the Upanishad, the *most blessed form*. It refers to the eternal supreme Light beyond.

In the Veda, it is *That One*; in the Upanishad, He *am I.*

In the Veda, it is *ten hundreds* (of rays), Sayana too explains it to be so; the Upanishad plainly says, *rays.*

*Released*, in the Veda; *marshal* in the Upanishad.

In the Veda they stood together; the Upanishad says *draw* together.

Always in the Veda the Supreme Person of intense Consciousness, Truth and Light is symbolised by the Sun; so also generally in the Upanishads. This one illustration is enough to show the direct connection of the truths in the Upanishads with the mantras of Rigveda. It should be evident that the knowledge of the *rishi* of the Upanishad is self-revealing and is more subtle and more grand and true than that noticed in the commentary of the champion of the ritualists, Sayana. Needless to add that the knowledge of the rishis of the Upanishad was especially superior to that of the modern scholars or their followers.

**RV (5.62.1): word-meaning, Sayana commentary and our remarks:**

Word meaning with explanation: *suryasya,* of supreme God *savitr* who activates all *rtam,* the supreme Truth in its own form, *rtena,* by the truth in the form of the universe standing as the three worlds denoted by the term lower half, *apihitam,* concealed *apashyam,* I have seen *yatra,* in which supreme Truth *vam,* of you both, *mitra varunayoh,* Mitra and Varuna, the place is *dhruvam,* secure or eternal; where *ashvan vimuchanti,* they mass the rays and marshal them. And where *dasha-shata,* the ten hundred rays stood together in on place *devanam vapusham shrestham tad ekam,* of those that had attained the form of the Gods or of the embodied Gods, the excellent, most auspicious Form, presiding over, yet above the Cosmos, known to the *rishis* famously as That, without compeer, dazzling, brilliant, the Form of Truth, have I seen.

Here it is to be noted: Sayana explains *vam* in the third case as the subject of the impersonal voice; we read it as your place, seat, *vam yuvayoh,* sixth case. Either way there is ellipsis. That the seat of Mitra and Varuna is the World of the Sun is not disputed. Sayana says *rtena* is "by water and *rtam* is the solar orb. I, the rishi have seen the sun covered by the water". On the other hand we say: it means the *rishi* says he had beheld the Light celebrated in the Hymns as *varenyam bhargah* the excellent Effulgence, *tad vishnoh paraman padam,* that highest step of Vishnu *sarvadhatamam shreshtham,* the excellent all-sustainer the One supreme Truth known by the terms *tat,* That, shining in that High Ether, the pure, intense and substantial Consciousness--known as *akshara,* the Immobile, the Truth whose symbol is the Sun.

To Sayana, *ashvah,* means ten hundreds of rays. To us also this is acceptable. But Sayana goes on to explain the purport by drawing upon legends which speak of the horses of *surya* imprisoned by *asuras* called *mandeha* and others, being released by the prayers of the invokers. We would suggest that the mention of release and dwelling together indicate the massing and marshalling of the brilliance's of the Light of Truth denoted by the word Ray. We accept too the figurative (metaphorical) meaning "of the embodied Gods" given by Sayana to *devanam vapusham.* If it be asked what are two *rtams* spoken of in *rtena rtam,* we would point out: the current use of the terms *rta* and *satya* to mean one and the same thing is also to be found at times in the Veda. But really there is a distinction between the two. The world *satya* signifies that which is the eternal, the supreme, Existence in its own form *sat. rtam* signifies that which is evident or perceptible, manifested out of the *satya,* what has come to be in accordance with *satya* or that which represents the *satya.* In this *rik* word *rta* has been explained in terms of *satya.* Both the *rtams* are indeed *satya.* One is the supreme *satya,* Truth, the Eternal of Upper Half known as the supreme Ether. That Truth, is here said to be covered by an inferior truth of the lower half. Sayana explains the passage to mean that the cloud covers the Sun and the rishi saw the Sun on the exit of the cloud. Now, one need not be a rishi to be able to see the Sun when the cloud has passed; anyone with ordinary eyes can do that!

No wonder the moderns, on the strength of such explanations, speak lightly of the rishis of the Veda as simpletons, idiots who see a great wonder even in the everyday sight of the sun and go into ecstasies over it!

The import is clear: the highest eternal Truth standing over, beyond, is covered by the inferior truth of this creation and when this cover is removed, one comes face to face with that higher Truth. Sayana's gross interpretation has it that the dwelling place of Mitra and Varuna is the Sun. The hymns laud both of them as the guardians of the Truth whose Law is the truth and whose dwelling also is the *paramam vyoma,* the supreme ether. “With the Truth as your law, you stand in your carriage in the supreme Ether protecting the Truth” RV (5.63.1). This and similar *riks* convey the identity between (the two) Mitra and Varuna on one hand and the Surya that is the Truth on the other. In explaining this *rik,* we have indicated somewhat, the trend of thought in Sayana's commentary as also our own.

## Other Veda books (Grouping of Veda Books)

The core of the collection of Veda books is the set of four types of books, namely Rigveda mantra Samhita, Yajurveda mantra Samhita, Samaveda mantra Samhita and the Atharvaveda mantra Samhita; each type having one or more recensions. These are all poems, some metrical and some non-metrical. These are the earliest books of the entire humanity. Each verse in these books is called a mantra and they collectively number more than 20,000. These mantras are the inspired words *shruti* heard by the sage when they were in a super-conscient state as a result of their askesis. Veda is not man-made in the sense it is not born of human intellect, human imagination or speculation. The mantras are the perceptions of deep spiritual truths and occult phenomena revealed to these sages. The rishis number is more than thousand; they include several women also such as *Vak Ambrini, Apala, Lopamudra, Surya* etc., we will mention more details later.

Associated with each of the four mantra-samhita books, there are Brahmana books, Aranyaka books and the Upanishad books. Thus the sixteen types of books are divided into four groups named Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda. Rigveda denotes the set of Rigveda Samhita books along with their associated Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanishad books. Yajurveda has two major recensions, Shukla Yajurveda and the Krishna Yajurveda. We give below the names of the books in the major or well known recensions of the four Vedas.

### Names of The Books

| samhita | brahmana | arnyaka | upanishad |
|---|---|---|---|

**Rig Veda (RV)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *shakala* | *aitareya* | *aitareya* | *aitareya* |
| | *kaushitaki* | *kaushitaki* | *kaushitaki* |

**Sukla Yajur Veda (SYV)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *vajasaneyi m.* | *shatapatha* | | *ishavasya* |
| *vajasaneyi k* | | | *brhadaranyaka* |

*m: madhyandina, k: kanva*

**Krishna Yajur Veda (KYV)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *taittiriya* | *taittiriya* | *taittiriya* | *taittiriya* |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *maitrayaniya* | *maitrayaniya* | | *mahanarayana* |
| | *kathaka* | | *shvetashvatara* |
| | | | *katha* |

**Sama Veda (SV)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *jaiminiya* | *talavakara* | | *kena* |
| *ranayaniya* | *chhandogya* | | *chhandogya* |
| *kautuma* | | | |

**Atharva Veda (AV)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *shaunaka* | *gopatha* | | *mundaka* |
| *pippalada* | | | *mandukya* |
| | | | *prashna* |

The listing is not exhaustive. Several other Brahmana books have been mentioned in the literature. However the above books are relatively well known.

It should be understood that there was or is no central authority which decreed that the books should be grouped in this way. This method has come down from the tradition which goes back to several millennia ago.

The texts of these books are overlapping. Each Upanishad book, for instance, is the last chapter of a mantra Samhita book or Aranyaka book or Brahmana book as the case may be. Shukla Yajurveda has no Aranyaka book; its *brahmana* is named *shatapatha.* Its last chapter is the famous and massive Bbrhadaranyaka Upanishad. Similar Isha or Ishavasya Upanishad which is made of only 20 verses is the last or fortieth chapter of the Shukla Yajurveda Samhita. Many of the famous mantras from the Upanishad which are quoted frequently by speakers or in books on *vedanta* can be found verbatim in the Rigveda Samhita and other mantra Samhitas. These elementary facts should caution us against accepting simplistic statements found in some English books on Upanishads such as, “only the Upanishads are the books of knowledge; all other Vedic books like mantra-Samhitas deal with rituals” etc.

The sixteen types of books given above constitute basic vedic books. There are also auxiliary books known as *upaveda* and *vedanga,* limbs of Veda. *Upaveda* has books such as *ayurveda,* the science of healing, *shulba* dealing with geometry and the construction of the fire-altars etc., *vedanga* is made up of books such as *shiksha* dealing with the pronunciation, *vyakarana* grammar etc. We will not deal with these books here.

We will briefly review the contents of the four types of books namely mantra Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanishads.

## Invocatory Peace Chants for the ten Upanishads

Prashna, Mundaka and Mandukya Upanishad

ओं भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।
स्थिरैरङ्गैःस्तुष्टुवाऽसस्तनूभिर् व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः ॥
ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः

***om bhadram karnebih shrnuyama devah bhadram pashyema akshbhir yajatrah***

***sthirair angaihs tushtuvang sastanubhir vyashema devahitam yadayuh.***

***om shantih shanith shantih***

O Gods, may we hear only the auspicious with our ears; May we see only the auspicious with our eyes;

With strong members and bodies, may we praise you and Enjoy the life given devoted to the Gods.

Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!

[This is originally from Rigveda (1.89.8), also Samaveda 1874, Shukla Yajurveda]

**Isha Upanishad**

पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

***purnamadah purnamidam purnat purnamudachyate***

***purnasya purnamadaya purnam evava shishyate***

That is Perfect; This is Perfect. Perfect comes from Perfect;

Take perfect out of Perfect; The reminder is perfect.
Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!

[This verse is a variant of the Atharvaveda Samhita (10.8.29)]

**Aitareya Upanishad**

ओं वाङ् मे मनसि प्रतिष्ठिता मनो मे वाचिं प्रतिष्ठितम् । आविराविर्म एधि ।
वेदस्य म आणीस्थः । श्रुतं मे माप्रहासीः । अनेनाधीतेनाहो रात्रान्सन्दधामि ।
ऋतं वदिष्यामि । सत्यं वदिष्यामि । तन्मामवतु । तद् वक्तारमवतु । अवतु माम् ।
अवतु वक्तारम् ।। ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः

***om vang me manasi pratishthita mano me vachim pratishthitam avir avirma edhi***

***vedasya ma anisthah shrutam me maprahasih anenadhite naho ratran sandadhami***

***rtam vadishyami satyam vadishyami tan mam avatu tad vaktaram avatu avatu mam***

***avatu vaktaram om shantih shantih shantih***

May my speech be fixed in the mind; May my mind be fixed in the Speech; O Self-manifesting One, reveal yourself to me;

O you two (mind and body), be the channel for the vedic wisdom; May I not forget what I have heard; May I study day and night without forgetting;

May I speak only the Right. May I speak only the Truth; May That protect me; May That protect my teacher; May That protect me;

May That protect my teacher; Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!

**Chhandogya and Kena Upanishad**

ओं आप्यायन्तु ममाङ्गानि वाक् प्राणश्चक्षुः श्रोत्रमथो बलमिन्द्रियाणि
च सर्वाणि । सर्वं ब्रह्मोपनिषदं । माऽहं ब्रह्म निराकुर्यां मा मा ब्रह्म
निराकरोद् अनिराकरणमस्त्वनिराकरणं मेऽस्तु । तदात्मनि निरते
य उपनिषत्सु धर्मास्ते मयि सन्तु ते मयि सन्तु ॥
ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः

***om apyayantu mamangani vak pranash chakshuh shrotram atho balam indriyani***

***cha sarvani sarvam brahmopanishadam maham brahma nirakuryam ma ma brahma***

***nirakarod anirakaranam astv anirakaranam me astu tad atmani nirate***

***ya upanishatsu dharmas te mayi santu te mayi santu***

***om shantih shantih shantih***

May my members increase unto me speech, vision, hearing, and strength of me and all my organs;

All is the Eternal of the Upanishad; May I never reject the Eternal; May He never reject me;

Let rejection be far from me; Let rejection be far;

When I have found Delight of the Self as my possession, may it be in my possession; May the Law *dharma* that is declared in the Upanishad be in me;

Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!

**Taittiriya and Katha Upanishad**

ओं सह नाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ॥
ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः

***om saha navavatu saha nau bhunaktu saha viryam karavavahai***

***tejasvinavadhitamastu ma vidvishavahai***

***om shantih shantih shantih***

Om! May He protect us both [student and teacher]; May He take pleasure in us both; May we be courageous together;

May spiritual knowledge shine in our front. May we not hate anyone.

Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!

**Brhadaranyaka Upanishad**

असतो मा सद्गमया तमसो मा जोतिर्गमया मृत्योर्मा अमृतञ्गमया ॥
ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः

***asato ma sadgamaya tamaso ma jyotirgamaya mrtyor ma amrtan gamaya***

***om shantih shantih shantih***

From the non-being to the True Being; From the darkness to the Light; From death to Immortality;

Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!

**Taittiriya Upanishad**

हरिः ओं ॥ शं नो मित्रः शं वरुणः । शं नो भवत्वर्यमा । शं न इन्द्रो बृहस्पतिः ।
शं नो विष्णुरुरुक्रमः ॥ नमो ब्रह्मणे । नमस्ते वायो । त्वमेव प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मासि ।
त्वमेव प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्म वदिष्यामि । ऋतं वदिष्यामि । सत्यं वदिष्यामि । तन्मामवतु ।
तद्वक्तारमवतु । अवतु माम् । अवतु वक्तारम् ॥ ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः

***harih om | sham no mitrah sham varunah sham no bhavatv aryama sham na indro brhaspatih***

***sham no vishnu rurukramah namo bramhane namaste vayo tvameva pratyaksham bramhasi***

***tvameva pratyaksham brahma vadishyami rtam vadishyami satyam vadishyami tan mam avatu***

***tad vaktaram avatu avatu mam avatu vaktaram om shantih shantih shantih***

Hari Om! Be peace to us Mitra; Be peace to us Varuna; Be peace to us ryaman; May peace to us Indra and Brhaspati;

May fast-striding Vishnu be peace to us; Adoration to the Eternal; Adoration to thee Vayu; You are the visible Eternal;

As the visible Eternal I will declare you; I will declare Righteousness; I will declare Truth; May That protect me;

May That protect my teacher; Yea, may It protect me! May It protect my teacher;

Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!

## Upanishads for Everyday Life (Q & A)

**Q1: What is your conception of a human being in one or two sentences?**
Ans: A human being is associated with three phrases namely: Body, Life-energy & Action.

**Q2: Can you add a few sentences on these three words?**
Ans: BODY is primarily made of matter. The body is powered by the Life-Energy. Note that the body is incredibly complex with various parts like brain, heart, lung, nervous systems, sense organs, organs of work etc., which are all dynamic or continuously changing. It is called a city (puri). Hence the body is called in the Upanishad (U) as that which is continuously changing (jagat). Life-energy keeps all these parts operating harmoniously, often in a self-maintenance mode. The life-energy has a central node called as Jiva which can be called the director of all these operations. The body is always in a mode of ACTION; some actions like cooking, playing are willed; many others like heart beating, breathing etc., take place without our conscious control.

**Q3: You said this JIVA is the controller of all of our bodily operations, and the body is like a vast house or city. Who is the inhabitant of this city?**
Ans: I am glad you asked me this question because it constitutes the beginning phrase of Upanishad. Isha or the God is the only inhabitant, (vasyam) of my body, your body and every body. The two words Isha and vasyam constitute the beginning phrase of Upanishad. Purusha, Supreme Being, Lord etc., are all synonyms for this Isha or God. Recall that each human being is a continuously changing entity (jagat). In the universe, there are other entities both inanimate or animate besides humans. The entire universe is also a jagat.

Hence U declares:

All the different individuals and all entities in this universal motion (jagat) are for the habitation (vasyam) by the (One) Lord (isha). (Verse 1, first half)

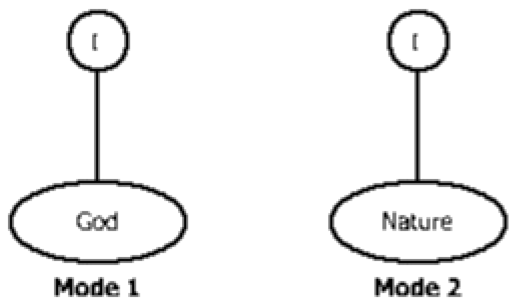
We call the aggregate of all these entities in universal motion (excluding the Lord) as Nature or Prakrti made up of phenomenon.

So we have introduced two important concepts God and Nature.

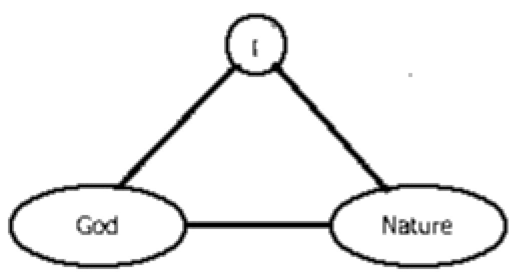
Phenomenal Nature is a movement of the conscious Lord. The object of the movement is to create forms of His consciousness in motion in which He as the one soul in many bodies can take up his habitation and enjoy the multiplicity and the movement with all their relations. (SA)

**Q4: You have introduced two big words God and Nature. But where do 'I' (with name Ram) myself come in?**

Ans: You (the questioner Ram) (or I the answerer) can operate in two modes. I can identify myself with the God as in mode 1 or I can identify myself with nature as in mode 2.




Note that all branches of Indian philosophy (darshana) deal with the experiences and explanations clarifying the relations between these three entities namely, I, God and Nature.




**Q5: Give me some details of the fabulous opportunity of mode 1 operation where I identify myself with the inhabitant, the Supreme God. Is it real?**

Ans: Yes. What does the inhabitant (God) in each house do? He only enjoys. Through the eyes, he enjoys the scene, through the tongue he enjoys the taste etc. So in mode 1 you are the enjoyer of the Universe.

**Q6: What you say is nice to hear. If I am really the enjoyer, why am I unhappy or miserable often?**

Ans: You feel you are miserable because you have given up your role as the enjoyer; you have become the inspection clerk of your store room. You go on listing all the physical things which you do NOT have (my house is small, I need a big room, I do not have the latest fashion-clothes, I do not get really tasty food.....) This is called DESIRE. Desire has really two aspects. One is a list of the things which you want, but do not possess. The second is a list of complaints of, "not being this'. (I am not famous, I am not popular, I am not agile, I am not pretty, I am not considered as interesting or jolly company...). As long as you are in the mode of, "I do not have it'', "I am not being this'', you are in mode 2, identifying yourself with the everchanging nature; since you are in mode 2, you are not identifying yourself with the enjoyer, hence you are miserable. So the Upanishad states, you can be the enjoyer only when you give up or renounce the desire and not grumble about all the possessions you do not have. It is well known that one who possesses anything physical can never be its enjoyer. You go to the park, enjoy the flowers, scenery etc., and come home refreshed. If on the other hand you own your own garden, then maintaining the garden itself is a job. So possession does not guarantee enjoyment. You may possess all the physical wealth. But you cannot enjoy the tasty dishes if you are a diabetic or a heart patient.

So the Upanishad states:

By renouncing (tyaktena) (the desire) you should enjoy; lust not after other's possession. (Verse 1, second half).

**Q7: I know this "desire stuff'' would pop up. First tell me, what is "desire?'' For example, I prefer the house to be neat. Is it a desire? I want to be an excellent professional (physicist, accountant, carpenter, cook, merchant etc.). Is it a desire?**

Ans: I also expected this barrage sometime, no harm. Being in the mode of Desire means you are complaining and moaning that you do not possess a physical thing ("I don't have a car'') or that you are not being this ("I am not famous, I am not popular'' etc.). If you merely complain, 'nobody arranges the

house', then you are in the desire mode and obviously miserable. Instead you can be in the mode of action and ask, 'what I can do to make this house clean?' then you are not in the desire mode, but action mode and you are busy with action, not complaining. Similarly, wanting to be a good carpenter is merely a desire if you are merely complaining. On the other hand if you are doing actions to become a carpenter or improving your skills then you are in the action mode. So what the Upanishad says is that you have to give up (renounce) this complaining or desire mode. Then you are fit for enjoyment. You become aware of the beauty of your surroundings, the smell of a flower, the sound of a favorite tune and automatically you are being the enjoyer. The Upanishad adds the additional condition, 'lust not for other person's wealth', because you should have some ethical or positive values behind your actions. Persons want to steal or take bribe because they think, ''it is a easy way of getting money; once you have money, you supposedly can have or buy anything else''. The above statement is really a great falsehood. If you are sick, you can go to an expensive hospital for treatment but you rarely recover your health. The reason is that the disease was caused by your life-style (smoking, drinking liquor etc., indulging in venomous remarks etc.) and you believe that the disease will go away by the money even if you continue the same bad habits. Clearly this is not possible. The Upanishads states that all the resources needed by you will come to you at the appropriate time as long as you are happy and helpful to others to the best of your abilities.

**Q8: What is enjoyment? I associate it with the feeling one gets with seeing a 'good' movie, eating tasty food. Any class.**

Ans: I can describe enjoyment by the activities associated with it. The opposite of enjoyment is boredom, worry and pain, boredom being the most dominant complaint. The best remedy to get over boredom is to take up some physical activity such as watering the garden or taking care of it, brisk walking, running, athletics, a fast or physical game like soccer, tennis etc. After getting over the initial bout with boredom, we should not allow it to come near us by cultivating awareness or becoming more conscious of all the things around us; Paying attention to the taste and smell of food, the texture of tree and life, the sounds in the nature, paying attention to the person speaking to us are all standard methods of increasing our awareness. Pay attention to your own gifts or aptitude like stitching a dress, repairing gadgets, building new gadgets like radio. Each one of us can become aware of the origin of the things we use everyday such as water, electricity, vegetables, fruits etc. Where are they grown, what is difference between the different varieties of the same fruit. All these activities bring in us a calm enjoyment, driving away the boredom. Sometimes we never know the time we have spent.

Enjoyment has numerous grades as suggested in the Taittiriya Upanishad. The highest or most intense type of joy is that experienced by sages in a high spiritual state called as samâdhi in the yoga literature. The calm and satisfying feeling experienced in performance of actions successfully and satisfactory is again a very high type of joy. Another slightly lower type of joy is that experienced in all intense physical activities like playing a game of soccer or tennis, brisk walking, swimming, running, athletics and sex. Singing or listening to music touching the heart centre is again a type of joy. The noisy music like the rock music touching the lower centres of our consciousness is an example of much lower type of joy.

Even though there is some overlap between the words pleasure and enjoyment, pleasure is associated with passive acts done rather unconsciously like watching a cricket match, indulging in gossip, especially vicious gossip; definitely give a very low level of enjoyment called pleasure. We do not here speak; of acts of sadism.

Physical pain like that felt by persons suffering from cancer is very real. But psychological suffering claimed by many has a large element of dramatization.

In this book, enjoyment refers to the higher states of feeling (bhava) which are satisfying both physically and mentally, which are not caused by external agents like liquor and which do no harm to society or to others or to one self immediately or in the long run.

**Q9: (action and sannyas) According to you renunciation (or external sannyas) is only the giving up the desires. It does not mean stopping the performance of actions. Every action has obviously a motive. So you agree that even with the practice of renunciation (sannyas), one can still perform actions.**

Ans: (inward renunciation and motives) You can perform all actions as long they are righteous. For example stealing, robbing, taking or giving bribes are all not righteous actions even if you say I take bribe or rob to give to charities (as one multimillionaire declared in US). This definition of renunciation is supported in Bhagavad Gita also. The performance of action is emphasized in the next verse 2.

Doing works in this world, one should wish to live a hundred years. Thus it is in you and not otherwise than this. (verse 2, line 1)

Thus verses 1 and 2 declare we can have enjoyment all our lives only by performance of actions.

"Real integral enjoyment of all this movement and multiplicity depends upon an absolute renunciation; but the renunciation intended is an absolute renunciation of the principle of desire founded on the principle of egoism and not a renunciation of actions or of world-existence.'' (SA)

**Q10: (Purpose of work and life) What is the purpose of doing work? Is it enjoyment only.**

Ans: I will reproduce the answer given by the Mother "You have been placed on earth in a physical body, with a definite aim, which is to make the body as conscious as possible, make it the most perfect and conscious instrument of the Divine. He has given you a certain amount of substances and of matter in all the domains -- mental, vital and physical -- in proportion to what He expects from you and all the circumstances around you are also in proportion to what He expects of you. Everyone has a life appropriate to his total development, everyone has a experience which will help him in his total development, and everyone has difficulties which help him in his total realization''. (M)

By doing work properly, we get enjoyment. But enjoyment itself is not the aim of life.

**Q11: (Work and enjoyment) You have said that we have to work always and enjoy. What is the connection between work and enjoyment? Does the type of work lead to enjoyment or the effort involved in work? How does work lead to enjoyment? A common notion is that manager's work is more satisfying than that of the subordinates' work? Is it true?**

Ans: We have picked so many wrong notions prompting the Upanishad to state: remove these glittering ideas so that we can see the Truth! It is not the type of work which gives us joy. It is the effort we put into the work which gives the joy. The effort could be physical or material, moral, intellectual, emotional etc. The effort in the doer of the work gets you connected with universal vibration of delight (called as Soma in Veda) and it is this universal force which gives us the joy; the degree of joy depends on the quality of effort, i.e., the awareness and skill which has gone into the work. Even if you do not believe in god or yoga, it is this connection to the universal force which gives us the joy of work. This joy allows to continue the work without fatigue. Highly creative persons like Vishveswariah or C.V. Raman are examples.

**Q12: (Mundane work) Does mundane daily chore like sweeping the floor lead to enjoyment?**

Ans: Recall that it is effort, not the type of work that gives enjoyment. If you make the necessary effort to do the work with the necessary awareness or concentration, you will feel joy. This is true even if the work itself is against your nature. It is in the concentration and awareness behind the effort that is the origin of joy. When you do the work with concentration and awareness, you are getting energy from the universal forces and this energy compensates for the energy you are putting in. Here you do not feel the fatigue.

**Q13: (Type of work for individual) Does the Upanishad make suggestions regarding the type of work an individual must do?**
Ans: The Upanishad has already declared in verse 1 (Q6), 'lust not after others' possessions'. You have to do only righteous actions which harm no one and which benefits all including yourself. You do not have to act like a saint and think only of others. By being healthy you will be helping both yourself and society. A sick person is a big burden to the society. The actual vocation you choose depends on your taste and temperament. As mentioned earlier, we may have to do the work which is against nature.

**Q14: (Way of doing Work) How to do the work assigned to us?**
Ans: There are four broad guidelines:

a) Do the work consciously with awareness; do not perform any work absentmindedly.

b) Be enthusiastic about the work. There is something called the joy of work which is felt by many persons who do the work with enthusiasm; they actually enjoy the work.

c) Every work has a goal or motive. Do not be obsessed with the result of the work. If you have faith in the divine, and if you have done the work with the conditions (a) and (b), then the divine will grant the result appropriate to the circumstance. Worrying about the result all the time only hampers the quality of result and hampers your own inner development.

d) Do not do work as an observer. Identify with it. For instance, if you are pouring oil from a big vessel to a small bottle identifies with the bottle; there

won't be any spillage. If you are trying to diagnose a fault in a machine, identify with it. Then you get an intimation of the source of the fault (Mother).

**15: (Result of work) You have said that we should work consciously without being overly anxious about the result of the work. But result of work is important for me. Is the result determined by fate as some opine?**

Ans: If you have experienced failure in a task, you have to examine all the aspects of your task done instead of simply blaming everyone else or fate. Bhagavad Gita states clearly that the quality of a result of an action depends on five factors namely:

(i) understanding clearly the nature of the work (ii) the capacities of the doer (iii) instruments of action, not only the physical instruments but also our senses and, level of concentration and awareness (iv) types of effort; physical, vital, mental (v) the unknown factors called daivam.

As an illustration consider an written examination as part of the work of securing a degree or diploma, The item (i) may appear to be self-explanations, but it is not. Not only a reasonable mastery of the subject is required, but also the ability to express yourself briefly but completely in the given period of time is also required. Is your intent only in getting a diploma which has not relevance to your future career or you believe the skills learnt in that subject are useful in your career? The item tip instrument refer to your writing skills and comprehension skills, the text books etc. Item (iv) refer to your mental abilities, ability of concentration and will power. Thus a person who has paid sufficient attention need not worry about the role of daivam or fate. Fate makes a contribution but it cannot be termed as the dominant factor. Note that the Sanskrit word for fate is, 'adrshta', those factor which we do not see.

Sometimes suddenly a person falls sick on the day of examination leading to a failure. But failures are also important in life more than successes. With failures one learns to meet the changing circumstances with an open mind provided. We do not become unduly depressed by one failure. Persons who are fearful of failures can never succeeds in anything, because in every vocation we face failure at some stage of our life.

**Q16: (Studying the work of others) A person says that others are not doing their share of the work in the office; she/he is doing the most work. This is a common complaint; Any comment?**

Ans: Recall the Upanishad statement, 'lust not after any man's possessions'; similarly do not look at another's work load unless you have been appointed to judge a person, you should never judge another person especially behind his back. If a project involves the specific contributions of several persons, then this topic should be raised openly. Gossiping definitely degrades our consciousness and reduces our overall creativity, productivity and happiness. To call gossiping as enjoyment is a great error.

**Q17: (Conversation: enjoyment and boredom) I enjoy hearing from a person about his new business venture or progress in his technical work or profession or vocation. I easily get tired while hearing about his family problems. What is the reason?**

Ans: The reason is that work, especially if it is technical work is the expression of the best in the man, while in his private life he comes to a low level of consciousness like most of persons. You are getting enjoyment from his/her description of technical work because you are in touch with his high level of consciousness.

Mother of the Sri Aurobindo states from personal experience "many scholars, writers, artists, scientists do remarkable work in their office; however when they enter the homes, they become detestable husbands, unpleasant fathers, intolerable people for these around them; the reason is when they come home, they want to relax and hence lower their level of consciousness and act utterly foolishly. It is a mistake to believe that fatigue goes away by lowering our level of awareness".

**Q18: (Unhappiness in workplace) A common reason given for unhappiness at the workplace is supposedly unreasonableness of the boss or the rules of workplace; similarly a reason given for unhappiness at home is the supposedly unreasonable or difficult parent or spouse. Any comments?**

Ans: We have already said that complaining about others will not help you; your level of unhappiness may even increase. So you have to switch to the action mode; you either change a job or stay in the present job. To answer this question, you have to clearly answer, "what are your expectations with your current boss at work or the current spouse". Even with complaints, persons continue to work for the same boss because there are getting a high salary, or they hope to get a promotion etc. Psychologists have noted that persons who

blindly change jobs or spouses find out that the same problems arise with the new boss or spouse. Ideally we should give up our desires and expectations or substantially lower them. For doing this, they have to become more conscious or aware and not be carried away by slogans likes "more money gives more happiness''. Then we do not continue to complain. Changes come to us because we live in an ever changing world. We can accept the changes gracefully.

**Q19: My experience is that many actions have a 'sticky' property. For example, I like to read the fiction books the so-called detective novels. After finishing one book, I am almost forced to read the sequel book even though the rational part of the mind tells me that this reading of the sequel is a waste of a lot of time. I seem to be in the grip of the book. I seem to have lost my freedom. Is there any connection to the phrase, 'work limits freedom'?**

Ans: You have stated your experience very well. Many have the same experience regarding TV watching, etc. This happens only because our will-power is weak. After the first act, our will-power is not strong enough to overcome the temptation to read the sequel book. But will-power can be strengthened systematically by many methods just as one strengthens one's muscles in a gym. Some methods of increasing will power are given later.

Action cleaves not to a man. (verse 2, second half)

i.e., action is not necessarily sticky; it does not limit the internal freedom of the doer.

"Actions are not inconsistent with the soul's freedom. Man is not bound by works, but only seems to be bound. He has to recover the consciousness of his inalienable freedom by recovering the consciousness of unity in the Lord, unity in himself, unity with all existence. This done, life and works can and should be accepted in their fullness; for the manifestation of the Lord in life and works is the law of our being and the object of our world-existence.'' (SA)

**Q20: What about the so called, 'workholics'?**

Ans: The term 'workholic' was coined in USA to denigrate the life-pattern of persons who put in long hours of work without any compulsion from others. There are two different aspects here. First of all the gadgets which we use everyday like cellphone, TV, Video, DVD etc., did not fall down from heaven. The designs of these gadgets are based on long hours of work done by many

persons; a twelve hour work day is common for them. Nothing can be achieved by the proverbial "bankers hours of work" (five hours per day). We should be grateful for the persons from whom we are benefiting every day.

However there are many persons who are compulsive workers by nature; they may be compulsive cleaners at home; compulsive accountants who want maintain a degree of detail in the financial accounts not needed by the organization. All these persons do not usually have any hobbies, they are not exposed to the enjoyment obtained by different types of work. Discrimination is needed at every stage of life such as the choice of life-style, choice of work etc. Again to effect the changes in life-style, there is a need for increasing the will-power.

**Q21: For some persons, there is a natural attraction for not doing any willed work; they like stillness. According to some Buddhists the great Buddha has said, "all actions lead only to misery". Any comments?**

Ans: First of all, nobody in the world can stay still all the day without doing any actions. Some of them may say, "we are meditating'. We will handle meditation later. When a person loses a job, he may feel carefree in the beginning. Then he says life is boring and he does something like chatting with all or going on a shopping spree. We label a work as boring or uninteresting, if the work is done "only to get a paycheck". Every action, however insignificant from the popular point of view or unattractive from the point of view of monetary rewards, has its importance for the cosmos if done consciously or with awareness and it leads the doer to an experience of bliss. This statement is experiential, not speculative. The purpose of a work is the manifestation of the Supreme Being in one aspect of the world and life. Work is the law of our being and the object of world existence.

Regarding the claim of Buddhists, you have to make the choice based on your experience. Is it within your experience that you can stay still all day? In Buddhism, there is a big gulf between the ancient teachings and the modern practice as in other religions. Buddha's cardinal teaching was kindness to animals. The present day Buddhists including the head of the Tibetean Buddhists, the Dalai Lama (including the present one) must have meat of animals for their meals everyday.

**Q22: Several persons based on their experiences claim that regular meditation is beneficial; they compare the meditational exercise to the operation of charging the battery (of our life); then the performance of**

**actions at work in the office etc., results in the discharge of battery. Your views?**

meditation (fifteen minutes) are very beneficial. The ordinary action exhausts us and drains our energies because we do the work unconsciously without any enthusiasm. Also we are tense while doing the work because we are obsessed with the results of the work. A student who answers questions in the examination always thinking, "what happens if I do not get the high marks'' will definitely fair poorly in the examination than the another one who answers calmly. Every action has a cosmic dimension and we who perform it are its conscious instruments. If we perform it consciously, then we experience the joy of work; and the result ordained by God happens and this result will be beneficial to us in the long run. We have heard of many who shifted their field of work after the initial failure and did very well later in a different arena. We cannot measure the value of action by the crude means of immediate success or failure. Some failures are more useful than many successes.

**Q23: (development of will) You said earlier that the power of will can be developed. Is there a method to develop it?**

Ans: A method has been indicated in an earlier answer. We give here a more effective method suggested in the mantras 15 and 16 of Isha U.

In the Veda Samhita mantras Agni is not merely a physical fire, he is a multifaceted psychological power connected with will, action and related powers. That is the reason that out of 10,000 mantras of Rig Veda, about 2000 are dedicated to Agni. Isha Upanishad is really the last chapter of Shukla Yajurveda mantra Samhita. Hence it focuses on this tradition of Agni as the power of will. In the Veda kratu means will. In our life, we begin many projects; some of them end on the beginning day itself, some later; only a few, very few, are completed. So for successful completion the will-power has to be developed. We have to ask whether the work is needed. That can be done by invoking the power of the Vedic Agni in us with the help of Veda mantras. This power grows within us by our aspiration, by our eagerness, by our sense of surrender to Agni till it becomes a mighty force.

So the Upanishad has this prayer to Agni:

"O will, (make us) remember that which was done, (make us) remember.'' (verse 17, line 2)

om krato smara krtam smara krato smara krtam smara.

Agni works within us even if we are asleep psychologically or physically. He is the divine force which manifests in matter as heat and light and material energy; then he brings in us all other divine powers needed for our growth like the mental powers especially mental clarity, inspiration, revelation, the power of friendship, the power of vastness (Varuna) etc.

Then Agni will make us begin all the actions, gives all the necessary help for their completion and leads us to the Truth and the Bliss. The related mantra of Isha U. given below is widely quoted in several Vedic mantra Samhita books and others.

O god Agni, knowing all things that are manifested (vayunani), lead us by a good path (supatha) to the felicities (raye). (verse 18, line 1)

agne naya supatha raye asman vishwani deva vayunani vidvan.

This mantra is widely quoted in many Veda books and appears in Rig Veda (1.189.1); Krishna Yajur Veda (1.1.14, 1.14.43); Shukla Yajur Veda (3.36), (7.42), (40.16).

The felicity refers to the qualities of all-round happiness such as beauty and harmony, love for all things, care for all the physical things or animals under our control, cleanliness in all respects etc. It also includes the physical wealth or resources needed in the enjoyment of the felicities.

Agni leads us along the right path, the path which is appropriate to each one of us. Each one of us is governed by an inner law (svadha) that supports us in all ways. We have to recognize this self-law in us. The path we follow must be consistent with our self-law (svadha).

**Q24: Does it mean that all devotees of the Agni always will travel in the correct path?**

Ans: The Isha U. does not say so. There are always temptations which make us take different paths, some crooked or devious. The temptations are the so called hostile forces. The paths suggested by these forces appear to be attractive. These temptations or inappropriate actions are called in the Veda as sin (enah). Sin in the Veda is some inharmonious action done with the hope of getting some immediate happiness.

"Remove from us the devious attraction of sin;

To you we offer our most complete prayer of surrender''. (verse 18, line 2)

yuyodhy-asmaj-juhuranam-eno bhuyishtham,

te namo uktam vidhema

Note the phrase, 'devious attraction (juharanam) of sin'. We have an idea it is devious or crooked. Still the attraction is there. In the Veda, the hostile powers are like some of the modern examiners who set very difficult exercises (both physically and mentally) to the students. Our failure shows that our education in not complete. So we try again and again to achieve perfection.

The only way is to offer our complete surrender; then the power of will guides us at every step, major or minor towards the goal. As long as we believe we know everything, the devious attraction of sin steps in.

**Q25: What is concentration?**

Ans: The words will-power, concentration, awareness have highly connected meanings. Recall that at any moment, there will be a hundred thoughts in us each wanting us in different ways, i.e. our awareness is scattered in different direction. Bringing together these scattered threads of consciousness or awareness on the task on hand is concentration. A person begins a task; he gives it up after a few minutes saying it is boring etc. Here the will-power is lacking. The awareness has gone from the task to day-dreaming. The increase of the will-power is the power of Agni earlier described.

**Q26: (Work in changing world) You said that our life is continuously changing jagat. Workplace is changing rapidly; with the old rules like a life-time job or security are no longer valid. Any advice on our response to this rapid change.**

Ans: I will repeat some points mentioned earlier and add some new ones. You have to be conscious while doing the work reducing your expectations about the results to a bare minimum. With this provision, you are able to accept the drastic changes occurring in the workplace in a joyful way.

The biggest reason for not accepting the changes is the sense of fear and the all pervading sense of insecurity. "I have lost my job; I have failed in the

examination, how can I force my friends and relatives?'' Fear or insecurity is there because one does not have the habit of a spontaneous trust in the Divine. Mother says that "There are people who do not even know that THAT exists; one could tell them, 'you have no faith in your destiny', or 'you know nothing about the Grace'; still these phrases do not make much impact on them.'' If one strongly believes that the helping hand of the divine is everywhere, and that is the best that happens at any time under the circumstances, then she or he accepts the changes willingly and joyfully. She or he understands that it is unreasonable to have a long list of unreasonable expectations before even beginning the work.

The drastic changes taking up in all aspects of our life, especially technology and industry are reflected in the drastic nature of the manufacturing industries. I will add a few words here on how the industrial sector of Iron and Steel has responded to these drastic changes. I will focus on these organizations both in India and United States. Because of the technological changes in the automobile industry, the biggest consumer of steel, the demand for steel was reduced drastically roughly by one-half. Hence many of the big steel mills in cities like Pittsburgh in USA were closed down because of their substantial financial losses and the major steel company in US, the US Steel even changed the name to USX. Persons who are afraid of change wrote vigorously about the misery caused to the people in the closed industries and regarded this act as one of anti-community or anti-people. However in the place vacated by these old and decaying factories, new service industries and electronic industries were opened and the life now is normal as before. People want work, not necessarily work in an iron and steel complex.

Simultaneously new technology was developed in which big mills which involve huge investments were not needed. Steel could be produced in mini mills, where price per ton was two thirds of the price of the bigger mill. One firm which made its name and fame in this mini mill is associated with the name of Mittal. Mittals have brought unprofitable steel mills in USA, Germany (former east Germany), British Guiana and made them profitable. The prestigious 'economist' of London includes Mittals among these ten low cost steel producers. I personally know the engineer of British Guiana Company who said that the company was making a loss of one million dollars per day. After one year of Mittals acquisition, it became profitable.

I will now recount anecdotes from India. The first is the Visvesvariah Iron and Steel Company (VIS) in Karnataka. It was originally known as Bhadravati Iron & Steel. When Vishveshvaraih (V) became the chief administrator or Diwan of Mysore in 1914, he immediately starting drafting a plan for making steel in the Shimoga district adjoining the western ghats. The place had iron, but no coal. Hence the steel had to be made from charcoal obtained by burning tree. Only

some companies in Scandinavia used this method. The mill was to be financed by the government. The British government which was against the industrialization of India opposed it and many eminent people in the press thought it was a white elephant. However V got unexpected help from the head of the finance department of Mysore government by name Chakravarti. He had vigorously opposed the construction of the Krishnarajasagar dam. But when he saw how successful and profitable it was, he had second thoughts about his own wisdom. Hence he did not oppose the plan of V. The Tata managing agents also were managing TISCO in Jamshedpur were made the managing agents of VIS also. The construction was given to the US firm Perrin which handled TISCO also. The work started around 1918 - by this time V had to resign as divan because of the difference of opinion with the Maharaja. The initial cost estimate was 64 lakh rupees. By 1923 the estimate was 211 lakhs. The technical operation was assigned to a team of engineers from Perrin (at very high salaries) at the advice of Tatas. However the operation was highly unsatisfactory and, the losses were high and even the original consultants Perrin and Co. advised that the part of the company dealing with steel making be closed.

At this juncture, the king asked his Diwan Banerji to request Visvesvariah to help the VIS. V readily agreed. He took several drastic decisions. He terminated the services of Tata managing agents since they were only traders with no technical knowledge. He terminated the employment of all the highly paid US technicians. Then he recruited several creative persons to run the company. This included the famous Madhava Rao who was administrator and not an engineer. V himself went to the Scandinavian factories which make steel from wood like Bhadravati and applied these techniques here. Even the workers cooperated by taking a voluntary salary cut. Thus V could make the company profitable by 1928; By 1929 V even secured orders from abroad for exporting 5000 tons of steel. He could have procured more orders but the British government discouraged the potential buyers of VIS steel. By 1929, the company was profitable.

Still the press and eminent persons wrote vicious articles against the company. A retired judge of the High Court collected all these adverse reports and gave them to Mahatma Gandhi who had come to Mysore in 1931 for health reasons. Mahatma Gandhi was all praise both for V and VIS and said the mill was a tribute to the genius of our people, the establishment of the mill showed how Indians can establish and maintain such complex machinery. He did not attach much importance to the supposed losses.

Now as a backdrop, I will add a few words on TISCO, the Tata Iron and Steel Works in Jamshedpur founded in the early nineteen tens. Around 1955, the management wanted to increase the production from one million to two million tons per year. Even though TISCO had about 50 years of experience, they had no skills in developing the expansion program. So they gave a turn key contract

to a US firm of Kaisers. The budget in 1954 was 65 crores, but when it ended in 1958 it was 125 crores. Even then after the completion, the total output would not so beyond 1.9 million tons and the Tata management, with their lack of engineering skills and blind trust in the Western Company did not want to take any action against the Americans. Even in the seventies and eighties when new steel making technologies came on the horizon, TISCO management brushed them aside. Still TISCO management cultivated the press and the newspapers had always articles praising the "Vision'' and "management skills'' of the Tatas.

These anecdotes are quoted to show that the stories of successes and failures of the industries described in the Indian press may have very little truth in them. The same is true for the assignment of the labels of 'success' and 'failure' to individuals. We need to focus on the methods of consciousness to evaluate performance as indicated by Sri Aurobindo and the Isha Upanishad.

**Q27: (Rebirth and learning) We are asked to learn continuously during all in our life. I like that. But does the Upanishad say anything about rebirth? Do we learn anything from the experiences of our earlier births? The popular idea is that we will be reborn as insects or animals (or even become a stone) as punishment for our (supposed) sins. Does this Upanishad support this?**

Ans: The answer is in verse 17.

"The breath of things (vayu) is an immortal Life (amrtam), but of this body ashes are the end. Om! O will, (make us) remember, that which was done (make us) remember! O will, (make us) remember, that which was done (make us) remember.'' (verse 17).

Isha Upanishad mentions rebirth in this verse. This Upanishad does not state the condition of next birth. However the Veda or the Upanishads do not support the idea of an animal birth for a human being. This is a creation or exaggeration introduced by the Puranas.

According to this verse both birth and death belong to this physical body. Its end is ashes. However the core of the life-principle Vayu in us -- called as Jiva (or soul) -- is immortal (amrta) does not die with the physical body. After sometime, this Jiva or soul creates for itself a new body and enters it. One usually does not remember the details of past births but evidence of rebirth are numerous. How can a child of two years chant Sanskrit hymns well which many elders cannot do. It is because the training which the child had received in an earlier birth has not been forgotten. The same explains mathematical or musical prodigies. Typically a

musician improves from birth to birth in music. Then he/she decides music is enough and takes birth for a different vocation in different circumstances. So we can recover the lessons needed by invoking the power of Agni, "make us remember''. Agni will give only the necessary power needed for that circumstance. In one birth, we are not going to become a genius in any field. Persons like Leonardo or Sri Aurobindo became masters in several subjects because they had spent several of their previous lives working on these topics.

**Q28: (After-death states) Does the Upanishad say anything about the after-death state of persons who live only for their physical enjoyments without any thought of moral or aesthetic ideals or their fellow beings? Does it say anything regarding persons who commit suicide?**

Ans: This Upanishad or others do not mention a physical place called hell or naraka mentioned in the Purana to which the evil doers will be sent. The word naraka does not even appear in any of the 24,000 verses of four Vedas. But verse 3 of this Upanishad (which is Shukla Yajur Veda 40.3) refers to the sunless worlds (asurya) where the Rays of the spiritual sun or Rays of the beneficial light are almost absent.

We have to understand there are several states of consciousness besides the one on earth which is dominated by matter, but has components of life and mind. By departing from the physical life, one does not disappear into non-existence or go out of the movement, but the concerned Jiva (or soul) passes into some other state of consciousness. These states are either illuminated or obscure, some even dark or sunless. By persisting in gross forms of ignorance dominated by selfishness, animal tendencies, immorality or by committing suicide (a mode of wrong dissolution of the body) one enters into states of blind darkness. Jivas who have made some progress enter into worlds of light after death, spend some time there and then take up birth on earth. So we do not have to look upon the cycle of birth and death negatively. Every birth and life is an opportunity for progress. However for most persons, the time and condition of death and birth are not in their (jiva) control. Persons who have reached some high stage of perfection can take up birth or death at their will. There are some who by the dint of spiritual practices completely opt out of the birth or death cycle and merge into the One. This is the state highly regarded by the teacher Shankara.

"Sunless are those worlds and enveloped in blind gloom whereto all they in their passing hence resort who are slayers of their souls.'' (Verse 3)

**Q29: (Choice between ideals) Often we are faced with ideals of service which are all individually very attractive or great, but which are mutually inconsistent. Some say focus on the health and food for the poor; others say it is education that is needed. Still others say, 'no help should be given till they show the required aspiration'. How do we choose which goal to pursue?**

Ans: The Isha gives the answer in the 15th verse.

The face of truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that you remove, O Fosterer (pushan), for the law of the truth (satyadharma), for vision (drshthaye). (verse 15)

In the inner yajna described in the Veda, Surya, the Sun-God, represents the divine illumination of the seer which exceeds mind and forms the pure luminous Truth of things. His rays are the thoughts that proceed directly from the Truth, the Vast, but become deflected and distorted, broken up and disordered in the reflecting and dividing principle, mind. They form the golden lid which covers the face of Truth.

The seer prays to Surya to cast the rays into the right order and relation and then draw them together with the unity of revealed truth.

So by our prayer of surrender, he reveals to us the correct path to follow based on our self law (svadha).

**Q30: (Time management, working in a hurry) We generally work in a hurry because we do not have enough time. The quality suffers, What to do?**

Ans: When a person is in a hurry he does the work incompletely or does it badly. There is a third way, it is to intensify one's concentration. If you do that you gain half the time, even from a very short time.

Take an ordinary example: to have a bath and dress. Let us say one usually takes half an hour without hurrying. If you hurry, you do not wash well or dress well. But if you follow the third way, i.e. concentrate your attention and one's energy on the task, then the same job can be done in fifteen minutes, without sacrificing quality. If we begin to practice this, there is tension in beginning, but with habit, the tension diminishes. You make use of work as means for growth. Note that the popular idea that work should be done 'disinterestedly' is dangerous, because it is easy to confuse 'disinterestedness' with indifference.

Parents speak of giving 'quality time' to their children, typically time periods in which one of the parents is fresh. Even here if the parent does not raise his awareness or consciousness to a level higher than that at ordinary times, the parent may not be able to understand what the child is saying in depths, i.e., she or he may not pay attention to the unspoken issues.

**Q31: Does the Upanishad have anything to say about the type of work I can do and the larger topic of personality development?**
Ans: This Upanishad does not mention directly the subject of personality development, but Veda does mention this topic. I will focus on this topic because the type of work you do depends on your personality.

Personality of a person is a description of the collectivity of all his talents in the physical level, emotional level (Vital level), mental level, the aims, goals, fears, the relationships to other persons and nature at large. It is not static, hence ideally this collectivity should become richer and wider in the course of time, i.e., we speak of the development of personality.

Some moderns characterize a new born baby as an empty bucket; only by pumping in knowledge by means of lessons at school and at home makes the child more knowledgeable. Veda does not agree with this. Veda declares that every human being is born with several talents which are in a latest stage. All the things in the collectivity called personality is governed by a law called svadha (self law) which is unique and which supports the person. All our education is bringing these latent gifts into the open. We can regard our human body to be made of numerous subtle switches. Just as pressing the electric button does not generate electricity, but only makes the electricity flow in the concerned place, similarly each subtle switch when pressed (figuratively) by means of a oral teaching or reading etc., yields the latent power associated with it. A music or mathematics teacher may be simultaneously teaching ten students. But it is well known one or two among them understand the lesson taught that day much better than others. It is because the latent knowledge of music or mathematics in them is more than in the others.

The first step in developing our personality is to become more and more conscious, more and more aware in our dealing with the persons, objects and entities around us. We become aware of our specific strengths dictated by our self-law. Then we can take steps to develop these strengths better by reading books, by contacting experts in that subject, by joining support groups. What is needed is an aspiration for development. Then nature or providence will give the necessary help. A reading of the biographies of eminent persons in each field, physics, maths, music, carpentry, gardening, writing, sculpting, graphic arts etc.,

will convince you the hints of the above statement. What is needed is faith in yourself and patience.

Our personality may have several weaknesses such becoming angry very quickly, laziness, procrastination, roughness in inter personal relationships etc. Again becoming aware of the reactions of the other persons in our meetings will indicate the necessary weaknesses.

The profession or vocation we choose must be based on our strengths. The advice given by well-meaning parents may be useless or even harmful. Many parents are easily carried away by the buzzwords or hyperboles regarding the currently popular vocations. They may never have the first hand experience. The best method is to read the concerned literature, especially the self-help books, and persons who have first hand knowledge of the vocation.

**Q32: I have heard that, "this obsession with renunciation or sannyas has ruined our country, it is the main reason for the physical poverty in India''. Your response please.**

Ans: I will give here a brief answer to your question, "has the practice of outward renunciation ruined India''. We should make a clear distinction between the practice of sannyas or outward renunciation among Buddhists and the sannyas among Hindus. In the times of Buddha and later on, persons from all walks of life became fulltime bhikshus or monks; many buddhist monasteries had a hundred or thousand monks. The monks in these monasteries were leading a very comfortable life thanks to the generous patronage of the kings as noted by the Buddhist monk from China, Hieun Tsang. So joining the monastery was a mark of status. All these persons would have been excellent artisans, merchants, artists, musicians, warriors etc. Clearly the energy level of the society at large declined by their absence; this lead to the weakening of the national fabric with the failure to face the external attacking hordes. A bhikshu, however advanced he may be, cannot have detailed knowledge of these professions and cannot contribute to the society directly.

But in the monasteries organized by the great teacher Shankara, the monks were selectively chosen, the number of monks in the monastery being small. The number of permanent monks in the great monasteries of Sri Shankara like Sringeri, Kanchi, Dwaraka, Puri, Badarinath is less than half a dozen, often two or three. There were attached educational institutions where students came and left after their studies. So we cannot say the Sannyas or monasticism among the Hindus contributed to the decline directly. But the emphasis on the other world matters in many of our teachings did make some contribution to the weakening

of the vital energy of the society. Specifically, the dominant idea among the Hindus in the last one thousand years is that the world is a place of misery; persons with wisdom should regard this world as transient, it should be regarded only as a place where we can prepare ourselves for the perfect state after death. Even Swami Vivekananda declared that to attempt to change the world or human nature is like trying to straighten the dog's tail. All these ideas obviously do not contribute to strengthening the society to meet the challenges posed by outsiders. It is important to realize that neither the Gita nor the Upanishads support this view point. The view point of the Isha Upanishad on this topic amplified by Sri Aurobindo has already been given in the answer to the question, "purpose of work and life".

**Q33: (active & passive Brahman): You stated in connection with verse 1 that there is only ONE inhabitant, God, in all these bodies; he is the enjoyer in all these bodies. We usually think of the Brahman as inactive (this is the usual definition of absolute). However to enjoy, the Brahman has to be in the role of activity; so we can speak of this active Brahman. So we have active Brahman and passive Brahman; has the same passive Brahman put on different bodies?**

Ans: The answer if yes.

The inactive and the active Brahman are simply two aspects of the one Self, the one Brahman, who is the Lord. It is he who has gone abroad in the movement. He maintains himself free from all modifications in his inactive existence. The inaction is the basis of the action and exists in the action; it is his freedom from all he does and becomes and in all he does and becomes. These are the positive and negative poles of the indivisible consciousness. We embrace both in one quiescence and one movement, inseparable from each other, dependent on each other. The quiescence exists relatively to the movement, the movement to the quiescence. He is beyond both. This is a different point of view from that of the identity of the movement and quiescence which are one in reality; it expresses rather their relation in our consciousness once they are admitted as a practical necessity of that consciousness. It is obvious that we also by becoming one with the lord would share in this bane conscious existence. (SA)

In the ordinary view the Jiva cannot exist in both at the same time; his dissolution is into the quiescence and not into unity with the Lord in the action and inaction. (SA)

"It is he that has gone abroad -- that which is bright, bodiless, without scar of imperfection, without sinews, pure, unpierced by evil. The seer, the thinker, the

one who becomes everywhere, the self-existence had ordered objects perfectly according to their nature (yatatathya) from years sempiternal.'' (Verse 8)

**Q34: (Quiescence & Movement) Let us go now to "God". We have all heard that the Supreme Being or Brahman is in a condition of absolute quiescence or stillness; for the attainment of bliss, quiescence is said to be necessary. Do we associate movement with Supreme Being also? Note quiescence and persistence of movement are opposed to another.**

Ans: The quiescence and the movement are equally one Brahman and the distinction drawn between them is only a phenomenon of our consciousness. So it is with the idea of space and time, the far and the near, the subjective and the objective, internal and external, myself and others, one and many. Brahman, the real existence, is all these things to our consciousness, but in itself ineffably superior to all such practical distinctions. The movement is a phenomenon of the quiescence, the quiescence itself may be conceived as a movement too rapid for the Gods, that is to say, for our various functions of consciousness to follow in its real nature. But it is no formal, material, spatial, temporal movement, only a movement in consciousness. Knowledge sees it all as one, ignorance divides and creates oppositions where there is no opposition but simply relations of one consciousness in itself. The ego in the body says, "I am within, all else is outside; and in what is outside, this is near to me in time and space, that is far.'' All this is true in present relation; but in essence it is all one indivisible movement of Brahman which is not material movement but a way of seeing things in the one consciousness. (SA)

"One unmoving that is swifter than Mind, That the Gods reach not, for it progresses ever in front. That, standing, passes beyond others as they run. In that the master of life establishes the waters.'' (Verse 4)

"That moves and That moves not; That is far and the same is near; That is within all this and That also is outside all this.'' (Verse 5)

The phrase in verse 5, "that moves and that moves not'', may seem enigmatic, but it is not so. For instance, take the wooden table on which this book is being written. Everyone agrees that it is stationary and not moving. The wood is made of millions of atoms of carbon etc., in each atom which is imperceptible to physical senses, the electrons are revolving at a fantastic speed, the speed of light (186,000 miles per second). So if you, "ask is the table associated with movement?'' the answer is yes. All these are relations of consciousness. When we are focusing on the atom (to improve the quality of wood) then table is "moving'. When we focus on its use as a writing platform, "it is stationary'.

**Q35: So you seem to be saying that God or Supreme Brahman is simultaneously quiescent and moving. It seems hard to imagine.**
Ans: I will give you a simple example. A lady (L) can be simultaneously a mother and a daughter. She is mother of D and she is daughter of M. She is mother and daughter simultaneously, but in relation to different persons. Similarly Brahman appears to our consciousness as quiescent and appears at other times as moving.

**Q36: (Vidya and Avidya, Knowledge and Ignorance) What exactly is the distinction between knowledge and ignorance. All of us prefer not to have any ignorance at all, if it is possible. All of us know that our knowledge is very very limited. What is the view of Upanishad?**
Ans: Ignorance used in ordinary language and ignorance used in the Upanishad or the books on Indian philosophy are quite different. In ordinary language, 'I am ignorant of cooking', means, 'I do not know how to cook'. In philosophy ignorance is the translation of avidya, which really means, 'limited or partial knowledge of an entity or object'. Avidya is only mental knowledge; mind has to divide an entity into separate aspects and understand each aspect separately. Then it tries to combine all these snapshots into one view and call it the knowledge of that entity. Clearly this synthetic knowledge cannot be the total knowledge of even that entity.

Vidya means the knowledge of the One from which all our manifestation came, yet which remains separate from all the manifestation. This vidya knowledge has remained all along unabrogated in the consciousness of the true seer or kavi, who is within us also. This seer within us stands back from the mental knowledge avidya.

The Upanishad states that we need both this vidya and also avidya or limited knowledge (called as apara vidya) in the following two verses.

Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Ignorance (avidya), they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Knowledge (vidya) alone. (Verse 9)

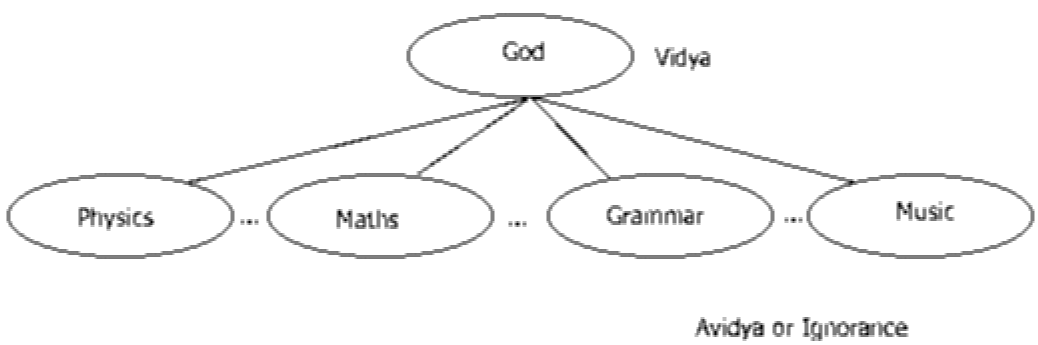
Immersion in the pure vidya appears to be plunging into greater darkness (note the phrase 'as if' 'iva') since the experience of nirvana is almost like total darkness.

The connection between the vidya and avidya and the need for avidya is clearly declared in the next verse 11.

He who knows That as both in one, the Knowledge and the Ignorance, by the Ignorance crosses beyond death and by the Knowledge enjoys Immortality. (Verse 11)

The knowledge of the One and the knowledge of the Many are a result of the movement of the one consciousness, which sees all things as One in their truth-Idea but differentiates them in their mentality and formal becoming. If the mind (manishi) absorbs itself in God as the formal becoming then it loses vidya, the knowledge of the One, and has only the knowledge of the Many which becomes no longer knowledge at all but ignorance, avidya. This is the cause of the separate ego-sense. (SA)

Death of an entity is nothing but non-functioning of one or more parts or lack of harmony between the different parts. Hence to overcome death, one has to master the (partial) knowledge of all the components. The seer in us, first stands back from the knowledge of the One; thus separated he as the individual inhabitant (verse 1) develops the knowledge in its variety and reunites this separative knowledge with the true source One and thus conquers death and division. Thus he has the knowledge of the One and the Many simultaneously. "This is our proper course and not either to devote ourselves exclusively to the life of avidya (limited knowledge or ignorance) or to reject it entirely for the motion less absorption in the One''. (SA)




**Q37: (Works and Knowledge) Great thinkers in the past have declared the fundamental opposition between works and knowledge. What is the Upanishad's view?**

Ans: The opposition between works and knowledge exists as long as works and knowledge are only of the egoistic mental character. Mental knowledge is not true knowledge; true knowledge is that which is based on the true sight, the sight of the Seer, of Surya, of the Kavi. Mental thought is not knowledge, it is a golden lid placed over the face of the Truth, the Sight, the divine ideation, the truth-consciousness. When that is removed, sight replaces mental thought, the all-embracing truth-ideation (also called as mahas, vision or as vision (drshti)) replaces the fragmentary mental activity. True Buddhi (vijnana) emerges from the dissipated action of the Buddhi which is all that is possible on the basis of the sense-mind, the manas. Vijnana leads us to pure knowledge (jnana), pure consciousness (chit). There we realize our entire identity with the lord in all at the very roots of our being. (SA)

The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove, O Fosterer, for the law of the Truth, for sight. (Verse 15)

O Fosterer, O sole Seer, O Ordainer, O illumining Sun, O power of the Father of creatures, marshal your rays, draw together your light the luster which is your most blessed form of all, that in you I behold. The Purusha there and there, he am I. (Verse 16)

**Q38: Suppose we call the Supreme as the BEING. Recall we express our existence by saying, "I am'. Does this person (Being) become the different bodies? Similarly the Supreme is regarded as One but everyday we deal only with the Many all the different things we see in the world are likely to be becomings or formation of the one the so-called Being. Some regard the 'Many' as unreal or at least 'less real' than the One. What is the relation between these opposites.**

Ans: (Being & Becoming) Everything depends on what we see, how we look at existence. In our soul's view of things, Being and Becoming, One and Many are both true and are both the same thing: Being is one, becomings are many; but this simply means that all becomings are one being who places himself variously in the phenomenal movement of his consciousness. We have to see the one being, but we have not to cease to see the many becomings, for they exist and are included in Brahman's view of himself. Only, we must see with knowledge and not with ignorance. We have to realize our true self as the one unchangeable, indivisible Brahman. We have to see all becomings as developments of the movement in our true self and this self as one inhabiting all bodies and not our body only. We have to be consciously, in our relations with this world, what we really are, -- this one self becoming everything that we observe. All the movement, all energies, all forms, all happiness we must see as

those of our one and real self in many existences, as the play of the will and knowledge and delight of the lord in his world-existence.

We shall then be delivered from egoism and desire and the sense of separate existence and therefore from all grief and delusion and shrinking; for all grief is born of the shrinking of the ego from the contacts of existence, its sense of fear, weakness, want, dislike, etc., and this is born from the delusion of separate existence, the sense of being my separate ego exposed to all these contacts of so much that is not myself. Get rid of this, see oneness everywhere, be the One manifesting Himself in all creatures; ego will disappear; desire born of the sense of not being this, not having that will disappear; the free inalienable delight of the One in His own existence will take the place of desire and its satisfactions and dissatisfactions. Immortality will be yours, death born of division will be overcome. (SA)

In the ordinary view all this would be admitted, but the practical possibility of maintaining this state consciousness and birth in the world together would be doubted.

But he who sees everywhere the Self in all existences and all existences in the Self, shrinks not thereafter from aught. (Verse 6)

He in whom it is the Self-Being that has become-all existences that are Becomings, for he has the perfect knowledge, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have grief who sees everywhere oneness? (Verse 7)

**Q39: (Birth and Non-birth) In popular lectures we hear that the Birth is the beginning of bondage. Still nobody, even apparently the saints, look forward to death. What takes birth?**

Ans: The reason for this double movement of the Thinker is that we are intended to realize immortality in the Birth. The self is uniform and undying and in itself always possesses immortality. It does not need to descend into Avidya and Birth to get that immortality of Non-Birth; for it possesses it always. It descends in order to realize and possess it as the individual Brahman in the play of world-existence. It accepts Birth and Death, assumes the ego and then dissolving the ego by the recovery of unity realizes itself as the Lord, the One, and Birth as only a becoming of the Lord in mental and formal being; this becoming is now governed by the true sight of the Seer and, once this is done, becoming is no longer inconsistent with Being, birth becomes a means and not an obstacle to the enjoyment of immortality by the lord of this formal habitation. (SA)

This is our proper course and not to remain for ever in the chain of birth and death, nor to flee from birth into a pure non-becoming. The bondage does not consist in the physical act of becoming, but in the persistence of the ignorant sense of the separate ego. The Mind creates the chain and not the body. (SA)

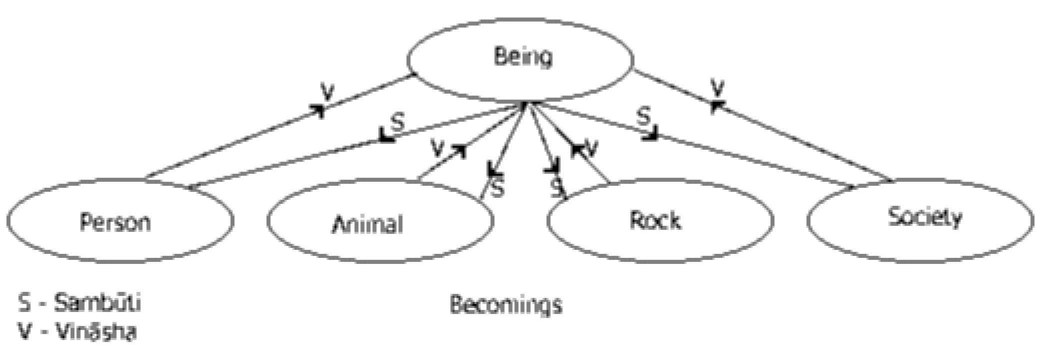
This is the stumbling-block to the ordinary philosophies which are impregnated with the idea of the illusoriness of the world, even when they do not go the whole way with the idea that the world is an illusion. Birth, they would say, is a play of ignorance, it cannot subsist along with entire knowledge.

Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Non-Birth (asambhuti), they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Birth (sambhuti) alone. (Verse 12)

Other, verily, it is said, is that which comes by the Birth, (sambhavat) other that which comes by the Non-Birth (asambhavat); this is the lore we have received from the wise who revealed That to our understanding. (Verse 13)

He who knows That as both in one, the Birth and the dissolution (vinasha) (of Birth), by the dissolution (vinasha) crosses beyond death and by the Birth (sambhuti) enjoys Immortality. (Verse 14)

Therefore when we have the sight and live in the Truth-Consciousness (verse 15) our will becomes the spontaneous law of the truth in us and knowing all its acts and their sense and objective, leads straight to the human goal, which was always the enjoyment of the Ananda, the Lord's delight in self-being, the state of Immortality. In our acts also we become one with all beings and our life grows into a representation of oneness, truth and divine joy and no longer proceeds on the crooked path of egoism full of division, error and stumbling. In a word, we attain to the object of our existence which is to manifest in itself whether on earth in a terrestrial body and against the resistance of Matter or in the worlds beyond or enter beyond all world the glory of the divine Life and the divine Being. (SA)



**40: I am intrigued by the phrase, "live for a hundred years'' you quoted earlier. Is it merely an expression of sentimentality or is there a deeper meaning?**

Ans: Of course the phrase, 'live for a hundred years' (Verse 2, Q.9) has a deeper meaning.

The mantra hints that we should choose the type of actions and the way of doing these actions so that we can lead one hundred years of life pervaded with health and happiness.

Note also the remaining line of the Upanishad verse quoted, 'Thus it is in you and not otherwise than this.' It means that your body including the mental and pranic apparatus is designed to last for at least a hundred years if you do the works all your life which are appropriate to you and by doing them in an appropriate manner.

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